

DECEMBER 9, 1921

No. 845

7 Cents

FAME AND

FORTUNE WEEKLY. STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

A SHORTCUT TO FORTUNE AND THE SMART BOY WHO FOUND IT

AND OTHER STORIES

By A Self-Made Man



'Now we've got him!' cried the two men. But they were wrong. Dick seized the oar lying on rocks, and, thrusting it down into the water, made a swinging leap for the rowboat, which he reached in safety.

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

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NEW YORK, DECEMBER 9, 1921.

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A SHORT-CUT TO FORTUNE AND THE SMART BOY WHO FOUND IT

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.—The Boy.

"Is supper ready, mother?" asked Dick Decker, as he entered the kitchen of his home, a modest-looking, weather-beaten cottage, with an armful of bundles he had brought from the adjacent village of Lakeville.

"It will be ready in a few minutes," replied his mother, a little woman of perhaps forty years, whose careworn appearance made her look much older. "Did you see your father?"

"No, I didn't see him. I wish you wouldn't call him my father. He isn't."

"He's your stepfather."

"Unfortunately he is, and a disgrace to both of us."

Mrs. Morse sighed, for she could not deny the fact. She knew that her second husband, John Morse, had degenerated, since she married him, from a fairly industrious mechanic to a tavern loafer—a lazy, shiftless man, who left his wife and stepson to get along as best they could on the occasional earnings of the latter, but never failed to come home to eat and roost, though he did nothing toward the family support. Fortunately, Mrs. Morse had no rent to pay. She held the cottage and quite a sizable piece of land, known as Throgg's Neck, in trust for her son Dick, willed thus by his father, her first husband, with the proviso that when the boy came in possession of the property at his majority he was to look after the welfare of his mother as long as she lived. In the event of his death the property was to revert to his mother, provided she did not marry again, in which case it was to go to his half uncle, Nelson Decker, and his heirs. Throgg's Neck was a third of a mile wide and three-quarters of a mile long. It divided two large lakes. The larger part of the Neck was unproductive ground because it was composed of a mass of rock that reared itself from fifteen to fifty feet above the country level.

John Morse married the Widow Decker, five years after her husband's death, under the impression that she was the unrestricted owner of the Decker property. He might easily have learned differently had he taken the trouble to go to the county seat, a large manufacturing town at the head of Clear Lake, six miles from the village, and read George Decker's will on file in the courthouse. The relationship between Mr. Morse and Dick, as the latter grew up, never became cordial, and the breach was widened by the man's downward course. Drink, coupled with

a feeling that he had been swindled, which widened into a chronic grouch against the world in general, was the cause of John Morse becoming a failure. Such was the condition of things at the time we begin our story.

"Is there anything new at the village?" asked Mrs. Morse, beginning to set the table.

"Yes, a baby, which the stork brought to Justice Smith's house this morning," grinned Dick. "Here's the weekly paper, out to-day, in which you will find the full particulars about the new arrival. There is also a stranger at the hotel, which is something of a novelty at this season of the year. He looks something like Mr. Morse used to look when he has a best suit. I asked the landlord who he was, and he said the name he put down on the register was Bud Doble. I am rather curious to learn what has brought him to these diggings, and I guess I ain't the only one who would like to get a line on his business. The loungers at the store were talking about him."

"I suppose you looked in at the tavern as I asked you to?" said his mother.

"I did, though it went against my grain, for the tavern has no attractions for me, and never will have, I hope; but Mr. Morse, contrary to custom, was not there, and the tavernkeeper had not seen him all afternoon."

"Sit down to your supper," said his mother, putting the food on the table.

Dick sat down and fell to with a healthy appetite, for the uncertain whereabouts of his stepfather did not bother him in the least, though it appeared to make his mother anxious. Before the meal was concluded the so-called head of the house made his appearance and took his place at the head of the table without uttering a word. All he seemed to care for at that moment was his supper, though this was wrong. He had something else on his mind—something that made him look more disagreeable than usual.

If Mrs. Morse observed the fact she took no notice of it. Experience had taught her that it was not advisable to butt in when her husband was not in good humor. Dick pushed back his chair and got up. As he reached for his hat his stepfather spoke for the first time. And it was with some effort that he did so.

"I am not feeling well," he said. "Will you lend me a quarter and go on an errand for me?"

"What's the matter with you? Do you want me to get you some medicine?" asked the boy.

"Yes. I called in at the druggist and he told

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me what I needed. He put it up for me, but wouldn't let me have it without the price, which he said was twenty-five cents. I told him I would send for it after I got home."

"Very well. I will go and get it for you," said Dick, willing to oblige his stepfather when he made a reasonable request, which was not often.

"Now that I think of it, I believe the price was thirty-five cents," ventured Mr. Morse, with a furtive look at his son.

Dick made no reply, but walked out and started for the village. When he reached the drug store he found the proprietor—a man of about five-and-thirty—sitting in a chair reading the *Lakerille Standard*.

"You put up some medicine for Mr. Morse a while ago. He sent me to get it," said Dick.

The druggist, whose name was Dickey, looked at him and grinned.

"Going to pay for it?" he asked cautiously.

"Certainly. How much is it?"

"Fifty cents."

"What kind of medicine is it? What is it for?"

"It's a bracer," replied Dickey, with another grin.

"You prescribed it, I suppose?"

"No, I didn't. Mr. Morse knew what he wanted, and I provided it."

"Has he ever used it before?"

"Oh, yes!" said the druggist, with another grin.

Dick took the carefully done up package, which was evidently a flat bottle and not an ordinary druggist's one. It was about a two-pint size. Dick dropped it into his side pocket and started for home.

CHAPTER II.—The Stranger.

He passed the hotel, a small rural one with two big trees in front and a long piazza, in which several men were seated in tilted chairs. It was about dusk now, and Dick did not recognize the men, though he knew about every inhabitant of the village. The roof of the piazza threw its shadow over them, and thus rendered their features indistinct. He had an idea that Bud Doble, the stranger, was one of the group. He looked in through the windows and saw a couple of young fellows playing pool in the billiard room at the back. The illumination was furnished by kerosene lamps.

Dick walked on and had gone perhaps a hundred yards when he heard footsteps behind him and presently a hand was laid on his shoulder.

"One moment, young fellow," said a man's voice.

The boy stopped and turned around, to find himself face to face with the stranger in the village.

"Can you tell me where John Morse lives?" the man continued.

Dick regarded him with surprise.

"I can," he said. "He is my stepfather."

"So I was told," said the stranger. "You are going home now, I suppose?"

"I am."

"If you don't object, I will go with you."

"I have no objection. You are a stranger in the village."

"I've been here before," the man replied.

"Your name is Bud Doble, I believe?"

"It is. How did you learn that?"

"When a stranger appeared in the village the people regard him with a certain amount of curiosity. It may be none of their business, but it's our way. I saw you at the hotel this afternoon and asked the proprietor who you were. The only information he could give me was that you had registered as Bud Doble. I took it for granted that was your name."

The stranger chuckled.

"Perhaps you are curious to know what I want with your stepfather?" he said.

"No. It is a matter of indifference to me."

"What might be your first name?"

"It might be Tom, or Harry, or Joe, or George; but it isn't. It's Dick."

"Dick Decker, eh? Sounds first rate. And so does Jack Morse. I always called him Jack, but he wasn't like the other Jacks I knew. He had a weakness of the backbone."

"I never heard him complain of his back," said the boy.

Doble burst out laughing, and seemed to take Dick's reply as a great joke.

"How long has Jack Morse been married to your mother?"

"About seven years."

"You live on a place called Throgg's Neck, don't you?"

"Yes; we're on the Neck now."

"Are we? Why is it called Throgg's Neck?"

"Because it's a narrow piece of land jutting into a marsh between the two lakes and was once owned by a man named Amos Throgg."

"Where's the marsh?"

"Over yonder."

"Is the Neck healthy?"

"Why not? The water doesn't stagnate in the marsh. It flows through it from lake to lake."

"I suppose your father—I mean your real one—owned the cottage where you live and left it to your mother when he croaked?"

"He owned the whole of the Neck."

At that moment the light shining from the kitchen window came in sight a short distance ahead.

"There's our house yonder," said Dick.

"Well, you run ahead, sonny, and I'll be along in a moment or two. Don't say a word to your stepfather about my coming over here with you. I want to give him a little surprise. Get me?"

Dick hastened his steps, while Doble lagged behind. Entering the kitchen, he found his mother making some buckwheat batter for the breakfast.

"Where's Mr. Morse?" Dick inquired.

"He's out in the barn doing something. He told me to tell you when you got back to bring him the medicine there. What is it?"

"The druggist didn't say, but it was something that Mr. Morse ordered himself."

He found his stepfather seated on a carpenter's horse, smoking and ruminating.

"Here's your medicine. It cost fifty cents. Why didn't you tell me that was the price?"

"I didn't think you'd pay it," said Mr. Morse, with a sickly grin.

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"I don't mind paying for medicine that you think you need, but I wouldn't lend you even a quarter to spend over Jackson's bar," said Dick.

A faint chuckle emanated from Mr. Morse's thorax, though his features did not undergo any perceptible change.

"Put it down, son," he said. "I'm obliged to you for getting it."

As soon as the boy's retreating steps sounded outside, Mr. Morse made a hasty dive for the package. He stuck his head outside the big door and listened for a few moments. Apparently satisfied that the coast was clear, he opened the package and took out a two-pint flask of whisky which the druggist had obligingly procured for him from the tavern, because Jackson only dealt with him nowadays on the C. O. D. principle, as there was a long, unpaid score against him on the slate. Removing the cork, he first held it up between him and the light of the lantern suspended from a nail, and then, applying the nozzle to his lips, took a hearty swig with evident relish.

"Ah! that goes to the right spot. I feel better already," he said.

"Glad to hear it. Drink hearty!" came a voice from the doorway.

Mr. Morse started as though he had been shot, and whisked the bottle out of sight. Then he saw the newcomer was a man, and his self-possession came back. He looked to see who it was, but did not recognize the visitor in the gloom.

"Who's there?" he said.

"Who's there? Why, who do you suppose? Don't you know your old pal?"

Thus speaking, the stranger to the village stepped in with an easy stride.

"Bud Doble!" gasped Mr. Morse, starting back in consternation.

CHAPTER III.—The Interview.

"Surest thing you know, you old rascal!" said Doble, in a jocular tone that hid a menace. "The door stood open and I came in on a zephyr. Well, what are you staring at? Why don't you say how tickled you are to see me, eh? It's more than seven years since we last met. Then you were in the witness chair and I was on trial for—but it isn't necessary for me to mention it. You know what I was sent away for, and you know who helped to send me. For a matter of seven years I've been dead to the world, but having come to life again, I'm goin' 'round renewing old acquaintances. I thought I'd start with you."

Mr. Morse was shaking as with an ague.

"You don't hold anything against me, do you, Bud?" he said, in a whining tone. "I had to testify against you."

"Of course you did, you white-livered scoundrel! You turned against me to save yourself. And you did it so neatly that no one ever suspected that you were up to your neck in the job as much as myself. I might have retaliated and shown you up, you miserable sneak! Why didn't I do it, eh? Why didn't I?" almost roared Doble.

"I don't know," replied Mr. Morse tremblingly.

"You don't know?" cried Doble, advancing a step threateningly, whereat the other retreated in sudden alarm. "You stand there and lie to me? Because I'm not a squealer, for one thing, but chiefly because my wife was your sister, and I wouldn't add more misery to the heavy load that crushed her to the ground when she saw me branded a thief by you. She's dead now—poor thing!—and she was true to me to the last, while you, you miserable hound, have come up in life!"

"Come up in life!" faltered Mr. Morse. "Do I look like it?"

"No, you don't look like it—you couldn't look like it if you were worth a million, but you have, just the same. I have met two or three of your friends, and among them your stepson, and I have found out a few things about you. You have prospered while I was wearing away seven years of my life in the State prison."

"Prospered!"

"Yes, prospered. Don't try to wriggle out of admitting it, for it won't do. You married the widow of the man who owned Throgg's Neck, which I have learned is a considerable slice of property, and as you haven't worked anything to speak of since, it's a sign that you fell into a butter tub."

"You think so, but it ain't true."

"Look here, Jack Morse, who do you think you're talking to?"

"To you, Bud. I married the widow, I'll admit but she didn't own the property."

"But her former husband owned it, and when he died—"

"He left it to her in trust for their son, Dick Decker."

"Then you haven't gained more than a free living by marrying the widow."

"That's all, and it doesn't amount to much."

"How do you get on with your stepson, the heir?"

"The young cub and I don't hitch."

"So I supposed from the way he spoke to me."

"Then you met him?"

"I did. We walked over here together."

"To-night?"

"Yes."

"He never said a word to me about you when he handed me the medicine."

"I told him to keep mum—that I wanted to surprise you."

"Huh!"

"You're taking medicine, are you? It looks like whisky to me," said Doble, eyeing the bottle Morse held in his hand.

A sickly grin rippled across Mr. Morse's sallow features.

"I had to pretend it was medicine to get it. My credit is out at the tavern, so I got the druggist to buy this for me, wrap it up and hold it till I sent for it. He advanced the price, and my stepson fell for the trick."

"So you're as bad off as all that?"

"Yes. I'm flat broke, and the old woman won't give me a cent any more."

"Why don't you go to work and earn something?"

"I'm out of practice."

"Which means you'd rather loaf around on your uppers than earn an honest day's wages,"

sneered Doble. "You're a fine pilgarlick, you are! I'd hate to own you in public as my brother-in-law. I suppose the boy despises you? I don't blame him. He's a fine young fellow, and I'd like to cotton to him. He'll make his way in the world when he starts out for himself. I'll wager he'll make something out of this property."

"He won't make his salt out of it. Nobady could."

"What kind of rock is on this place?"

"How do I know? It's just rock."

"How far does the rock run? Beyond the Neck?"

"Not a great way, unless it's under the ground. There's a fine farm just beyond us, belonging to a man named Beaseley. He makes a good living off it."

"Can you get me a \$10 bill from your wife?"

"No, I can't. I couldn't get a one-dollar one for myself."

"Well, I'm strapped. I guess I'll have to interview your wife myself."

"My wife hasn't any money except what my stepson earns. I doubt if she has ten dollars, or even five, in the house now."

"You people are the worst strapped for country folks I ever ran against. Well, something has got to be done. If you haven't any money, and your wife hasn't any, you've got to help me get it. I didn't expect to do another job so soon after I got out, but needs must when the Old Boy drives."

"What do you mean?" said Mr. Morse fearfully.

"I mean we'll have to crack some crib around here, and this time I'll take care that you won't round on me like you did before. In any case, you haven't your sister to fall back on now, and if there should be a slip you won't glide out of the responsibility like you did before."

"No, no, Bud. I don't want to have anything to do with any job of that kind."

"You'll do as I say, Mister Jack Morse, or take the consequences," said Doble, in a decided tone.

"What do you want me to do?"

"You're acquainted around here, all the way to Lakeport. I want you to pick out a house that's safe and worth' the trouble of going through. Whatever we get I'll divide with you, then you'll have a bunch of money to enjoy yourself, and I'll dust out to parts unknown, and you'll never see me again. Now, then, what do you say?"

Mr. Morse was silent for a moment, his brain busy with the emergency, then he said, with some hesitation:

"I'll stand in with you, Bud, but only once—only once."

"If the job is successful, I am satisfied to shake you for good and all. Now hand me that flask and we'll seal our bargain with a drink."

Morse passed the flask to his brother-in-law, and Doble took a liberal drink. His companion duplicated it, and then they sat down and talked over the scheme.

pearance of Bud Doble. He was not disappointed, for the stranger appeared almost immediately.

"Well, sonny, if you'll point the way to the room where your stepfather is enjoying the comforts of home, I'll consider it a favor, but let me announce myself," said Doble.

"He's not in the house. See that light yonder in the yard?"

"I do."

"It comes from our barn. You'll find Mr. Morse there."

Dick entered the house and told his mother that a stranger had called to see Mr. Morse and he had sent him to the barn.

"A stranger!" ejaculated his mother, a bit surprised, for Mr. Morse seldom had a visitor, as the only acquaintances he hobnobbed with were those he met chiefly at the tavern, and they never came out to the Neck.

"His name is Bud Doble. He walked out here with me from the village. He told me he knew Mr. Morse before he married you."

Dick's mother made no reply and became strangely silent, working mechanically at a stocking she was knitting for her husband. She knew that Bud Doble was her husband's brother-in-law, and that he had been sent to prison for assault and attempted robbery on the highway, the victim being an influential politician named Parker Buckley, who had just been elected to Congress at the time. Mrs. Morse recalled the fact that her husband, whom she was not then acquainted with, though she married him a few months later, was the chief witness for the prosecution.

Doble had been convicted on his testimony, and she dreaded the meeting between the two men. She feared Doble had come to take vengeance on the man responsible for his imprisonment, and she knew her husband was too great a coward and incapable, physically, to put up any effective defence. Haunted by this fear, she put a shawl over her head, crept down to the barn and overheard a considerable part of the interview between Doble and her husband, and was particularly unnerved and shocked by the way it ended in Mr. Morse yielding compliance to the rascally proposition of his brother-in-law.

Before she left the house, however, Dick went out himself to see if his friend, Joe Beasley, was coming over to spend the evening with him. While standing a few yards in front of the cottage, Dick was surprised to hear the report of a shotgun in the marsh. The report of the gun showed there was somebody in the marsh at that moment, and Dick jumped to the conclusion that it must be a party of sportsmen who had ventured in without a guide and, finding they could not get out, had signaled for help. The boy listened, but no further shooting came from the marsh. He was a bit surprised at that, for surely if a hunting party could fire once they could, and naturally would, do so many times.

Complete silence, however, brooded over the marsh, and though Dick strained his ears, he did not hear even a faint, distant shout.

"I'm bound to say it's very odd," he said to himself. "A single shot at this hour from the marsh is almost mysterious. If Joe were here,

CHAPTER IV.—The Shot in the Marsh.

When Dick left the barn he went to the house and stood outside, expecting the momentary ap-

I think I'd like to go toward the island and investigate."

Hardly was the thought formed in his mind when he felt a slap on the back, and, turning around, saw Joe Beasely at his elbow.

"What are you looking at so intently, Dick?" asked Joe.

"Did you hear that shot in the marsh as you came along?" asked Dick.

"I did, and I was wondering about it. There must be somebody out there, and that was his signal for help."

"But there was only one shot."

"I know it, but one shot is a whole lot when it's your last cartridge."

"Let them stay and learn a lesson not to remain in the marsh another time until night overtakes them."

The boys hung around outside a while longer, but there were no sounds from the marsh, so they went up to Dick's room. At nine o'clock Joe left and then Dick came into the sitting room.

"I see Mr. Morse is still at the barn with his old friend Doble," he said. "I wonder how long he expects to stay?"

"I don't know," replied his mother, in a low tone.

"It's a wonder he didn't bring Doble in and introduce him to you."

Mrs. Morse made no reply. At that moment it began to rain. Dick noticed the drops beating lightly on the window.

"Hello! It's raining, mother! If it doesn't let up soon, we'll have to make a bed somewhere for the visitor, for it's a mile to the village, and he'd get soaked if he tried to return there. Besides, he might lose his way in the dark. I'll let him have my room, and I'll sleep on the hay in the barn. I guess I can stand it for one night," said Dick.

"No, no; he mustn't sleep here. It will clear up by and by, and then he can go," said his mother, with a feverish earnestness that somewhat surprised her son.

"Oh, all right! You are the boss of the house, mother," said Dick.

The rain continued, and after a while Mr. Morse came in, but Doble was not with him. He shut the door and bolted it, as usual, for the night. Dick and his mother accepted that as a sign that the visitor had departed for the village in spite of the rain, and the latter was glad in her heart.

CHAPTER V.—The Firebug.

Dick went to his room and prepared to retire. His room was at the back of the house and faced the barn. A little after midnight Dick awoke with a start. He sat up in bed and looked around his room, but all was dark and still.

"I wonder what caused me to wake up?" he asked himself.

He went to his door and listened, but heard no suspicious sound. Then he went to the window and looked out. It had stopped raining some time since, and the sky was clearing fast. He looked casually at the barn and was surprised to see a dark figure creeping along its white front.

That was a decidedly suspicious thing, and the boy lost no time in hurrying into his clothes. As he did not regard his stepfather as a man whose backbone was stiff enough to tackle anything out of the usual that had a spice of danger in it, Dick felt it would be of little use to arouse him.

So he took the revolver he kept under his pillow and started forth himself to round up the night prowler. He let himself out by the front door, walked to the fence that enclosed the house, yard and outbuildings, got over and followed it back toward the barn. By keeping the fence between him and the yard, as a partial screen, he hoped to get a line on the intruder without that person getting wind of his proximity. He saw nothing of the prowler till he reached a point that gave him a view of the back of the barn. There he saw the figure doing something against the building.

"He's trying to cut his way in," thought Dick. "I'll give him a bit of surprise."

He cocked his weapon, intending to discharge it so that the bullet would strike over the fellow's head and frighten him away. But Dick got a surprise himself. He saw a flash of light, as though the intruder had struck a match. Almost immediately this was followed by a bright light. As the man got on his feet, Dick saw the blaze of a fire kindled against the back of the barn.

"Holy smoke!" he ejaculated, "the rascal is attempting to set our barn afire. I haven't a moment to lose."

He discharged the revolver at the man and leaped the fence. The intruder uttered a sharp cry and began running. He disappeared around the corner of the barn with a limping gait. Dick began kicking the burning material away from the barn as soon as he reached it, but the stuff that had been gathered against it was very inflammable and the barn itself had caught fire.

"My! I'm afraid I'll never be able to save the building, for once it gets inside that will see its finish. If I only had a little help," said Dick.

At that moment a head was stuck out of one of the second-story openings and a voice exclaimed:

"Hello! What are you up to?"

Dick looked up in astonishment.

"Who are you up there?" he said.

"Is that you, sonny?" said the man on the second floor, in tones that sounded like Bud Doble's. "Are you trying to make a bonfire of this shack? If you are, give me a chance to get out first."

"Come down here, quick, and help me put this fire out!" said Dick, postponing the inquiry as to how the stranger came to be roosting in the barn.

"I'll have to drop out this window, for Morse locked me in here when he went away," said Doble, who, in another moment, got out of the opening backward and dropped.

"Try and keep the flames down while I run to the well for a pail of water," said the boy.

One pail of water put the kibosh on the incendiary fire and the barn was saved.

"How did this happen, sonny?" asked Doble, when all danger was over.

"Some scoundrel came here and set it on fire," said Dick.

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"How did you get on to him? Haven't you gone to bed yet?"

"I woke up suddenly, looked out of my window and saw somebody prowling around the barn. I dressed, took my revolver, and came here to scare the fellow away."

"Did you shoot at him?"

"I did."

"You did well to save the barn from going up, sonny," he said. "I'm mighty glad you turned up. If you hadn't, I might have been burned up. I shan't forget the favor."

"You needn't worry about that. I wasn't thinking about you. I had no idea you were in the loft. I thought you went back to the hotel."

"It was raining when my visit came to an end, and as I didn't care to get wet I asked your stepdad if I could pass the night in the barn. At first he objected, but in the end he said I could, but he told me he'd have to lock me in. I didn't mind that, so he went away and I turned in on the hay in the loft. That's how I came to be there when the chap started the fire."

"I suppose you'd like to get back and finish the night?"

"No. I guess I'll go on to the village," said Doble.

"You'll find the hotel closed tight as wax at this hour."

"I'll wake somebody up. I'm entitled to get to my room."

"Suit yourself," said Dick; "but there's a ladder under the building which would help you up to the window."

Doble, however, preferred not to remain, and Dick parted with him at the front of the cottage. The boy turned in again, wondering who the person was who had fired the barn.

Next morning, Mr. Morse did not appear at the breakfast table.

"What's the matter with him, mother? Is he sick?" asked Dick.

"He told me he had a touch of rheumatism in his leg and can't get up."

After breakfast Dick finished the chores and then tramped off to school. He carried his lunch with him, and put in the noon recess, after eating it, with his schoolmates, among whom was Joe Beaseley.

"Let's go to the island in the marsh after school, Joe," said Dick just before the schoolma'am rang the bell.

"I'm on," nodded Joe.

The school was dismissed about three, and at four Dick and his friend boarded the former's rowboat and pushed off into the swamp. Half an hour later they reached the island and stepped ashore. Dick tied the painter to a tree and they started to look around. Two big rocks showed their tall heads in the center of the island. About a yard of space separated them. The shrubbery was considerably mussed up close to the rocks, as if several men had been standing and walking there. The boys discovered that fact when they reached the spot. The conclusion they reached was that a party of sportsmen had been there. The boys walked all over the island, saw nothing to attract their attention beyond the trampled grass, and re-embarked.

"That gunshot last night amounted to nothing," said Joe, as they started back.

"Not as far as we could make out from our inspection of the island," said Dick. "It might not have come from the island, but from some part of the marsh near it. It was only my conjecture that it sounded from the island."

"Say, it was lucky you woke up last night in time to save your barn from being burned down, and also the stranger gent from being burned up in it. What aroused you?"

"I couldn't tell you. I just woke up as if somebody had shaken me."

"I suppose you have no suspicions who the rascal was?"

"Not the slightest. The whole thing is a mystery to me."

At that point the boys saw the roof of the cottage above the reeds of the marsh and knew they were close to the shore. In a few moments the boat emerged into a very narrow patch of open water which lapped the end of the Neck. They presently stepped on the solid ground and Dick tied the painter to a ring in a stout stake driven into the earth. Then they strolled over to the house.

CHAPTER VI.—Dick and the Congressman.

After supper Dick walked into the village. It was dark when he got there, and after making two or three purchases at the general store he left the bundle, intending to call for it later. The evening boat was due at eight o'clock. It brought the late afternoon mail down from Lakeport. The boat remained all night at the village wharf and returned to Lakeport in the morning, making several stops on the other side of the lake.

Dick found a strong wind blowing when he reached the wharf, where he went to see the boat come in. An automobile, which he identified as belonging to Congressman Buckley, stood close to the head of the wharf, with the chauffeur sitting in it. Dick took it as a sign that the big politician was coming home on that boat.

Congressman Buckley was very popular in his district, which fact accounted for his second term in Congress, and as his party controlled both the district and the State, it was quite likely he would be elected again if he wanted the honor. Like all great men, he had his weakness, and this weakness was the source of his popularity—he drank more liquor than was good for him, or that he could sometimes carry with comfort and dignity. He was a "good fellow" with his friends, and they helped him keep up his end.

When Dick reached the end of the wharf near a number of other persons drawn there by the coming of the boat, he saw the steamer's lights rising and falling as she came nearer and nearer. At last she came in and the captain had some trouble in docking her properly. The narrow gangplank was run out and three persons stepped ashore. Neither of them was the Congressman. He was up in a little room behind the captain's office, playing cards with a friend he had brought with him to spend the week-end at his home.

Dick went aboard and had a chat with the engineer, with whom he was acquainted. Then

he talked with a couple of the deckhands, who were washing up preparatory to going to their supper, which they got on board. Finally he went ashore and started up the little wharf. He was somewhat surprised to see the automobile still standing where he had noticed it when he first arrived. The chauffeur, who also acted as gardener and general factotem on the Buckley property, had his overcoat up about his ears. He called to Dick.

"Will you do me a favor?" he said.

"Sure," said the boy.

"Go on board the steamer and tell the captain, or the mate, that Mr. Buckley's car is waiting to take him home."

"All right," replied Dick, who thereupon went back on board.

He knew both the mate and captain by sight, and he looked around on the upper deck and cabin for them, but they were not in sight. He then went to the door marked "Captain's Office," and knocked. There was no response, even when he knocked a second time. He felt sure that Congressman Buckley and others were in there, for he heard loud talking and laughter. He ventured to open the door and looked in. There was nobody in the little office, where a lamp was turned low. The door of a room beyond stood ajar, and the place was brilliantly lighted up.

The Honorable M. C. was in there, possibly with the captain, and somebody else, for Dick recognized at least three voices, one of them rather thick. The boy walked over to the door, pushed it open a little way and saw what was going on in there. A new game had been started after the boat had been docked, and the captain had been invited to take a hand, an invitation he had eagerly accepted, for he appreciated the honor of being on hail-fellow-well-met terms with the distinguished politician and president of the steamboat company. Dick knocked on the panel of the door. The captain and the magnate's friend, who was fairly sober, looked up and saw the young visitor.

"What do you want?" asked the captain curtly.

"I came to tell Mr. Buckley that his auto is waiting for him at the head of the dock."

The Congressman looked up in a sleepy way on hearing his name mentioned.

"Whazzer matter? Wanta shee me, boy?" he said thickly.

"Your car is waiting for you, sir," repeated Dick.

"Car! Oh, yes! Let ear wait.. Lotser time to get home. Only six o'clock. Dinner served at eight. Make the run in ten minutes."

"It's after seven," said the Congressman's friend, looking up at the clock.

"Whaz zat? After sheven, yo: shay? Didn't know it waz show late. We'll have to start, Buggins," he said to his friend, whose name was Huggings. "Help me up, will you? Feel kinder tired. Been sitting too long one posish—posish—"

With Huggings's help he stumbled to his feet, grabbed the doorway with one hand and straightened up with an effort. He started forward as Dick made for the outside door.

"Shay, boy. One minute!" he called.

"Yes, sir," said Dick, stopping.

"In hurry?"

"Not particularly, sir."

"Here's a dollar bill. Help me to wharf. Feel kinder faint. Room close and all that."

"I'll help you, but I don't want the money."

"Don't want the money?" said the Congressman, blinking at him as if he was some new kind of curiosity. "Shay that again, boy."

"A dollar is too much for helping you to the car," said Dick.

"Nossing of kind. Dollar right tip. Always give dollar for special shervice. Your arm, boy."

Dick saw he was expected to keep the money, so he shoved it into his vest pocket and offered his arm to the unsteady gentleman. Leading the way, followed by Huggings and the captain, they left the little office and proceeded down the narrow, brass-lined staircase to the lower deck. When they reached the gangplank Dick found it very unsteady. The steamer strained at her hawsers one moment, widening the distance to the wharf by a couple of feet, and the next bump her fenders went against the stringpiece with a thump and a rise of nearly a foot.

All would have gone well had not the politician suddenly remembered something he wanted to say to his friend Huggings. He stopped short and turned around. The sweep of the lake waters pulled the boat away from the wharf. At the same time the plank sank six inches as the inner side of the boat rolled downward that much. A man with all his senses about him would have had to steady himself to maintain his equilibrium. The Congressman, being in a state of mental eclipse, reeled. Feeling himself falling, he seized hold of Dick to steady himself. As Mr. Buckley weighed 180 pounds, while Dick was forty pounds lighter, Dick was unable to hold him up, so the result was the gentleman pitched over between the steamboat and the wharf, and as he had a strong grip on the boy's arm, they both went down together, struck the water with a huge splash and disappeared beneath its surface.

CHAPTER VII.—The Bribe.

The current bore them along the side of the boat and they came to the surface at her bow. Dick was a good swimmer, and though encumbered by his clothes, he managed to hold the politician up. He could not have done this long, and would have been compelled either to have abandoned the man to his fate, or have sacrificed himself in a useless endeavor, but, providentially, a small, rude raft, which had broken from its moorings, came across their path and both Dick and the partially sobered Congressman grabbed the nearest end of it.

Watching his chance, Dick scrambled on to it and essayed to help the politician onto it, too. This was beyond his strength, and the wobbling of the raft, which was not able to sustain the man's weight, in addition to Dick's, without sinking below the surface, prevented Mr. Buckley from getting onto it. Thus they were swept down the lake close in to the shore, Dick clinging with his hand to the rope which bound a small box to the center of the raft, and with the

other to the magnate's collar to prevent him from being wrenched off by the rude buffeting of the waves. Dick had to crouch low, and in that position the water was continually dashing into his face and sometimes over his head. The chill wind searched through his soaked garments, just as the chill water benumbed the limbs of the Congressman.

Dick hoped that the waves would send the raft against the shore, but they did not, though it lay tantalizingly near. Instead, they were carried down to the marsh. Had they gone into it, they never would have got out that night, nor for many hours of the following day, and the exposure would have wound up the career of the politician, and probably have put Dick on a sick-bed. Fortunately, as they struck the edge of the marsh, a counter current whirled them up to the shore, and when Dick felt the raft bump under him and saw the magnate rise out of the water, he jumped into the shallows and hauled Mr. Buckley onto the dry ground.

Cold water being the natural enemy of ardent spirits, the immersion had practically sobered the great man. He realized everything that had happened and, as a consequence, his feelings were at a pretty low ebb. For at least once in his life he was thoroughly ashamed of himself, and he dreaded the effect of newspaper exposure, for he feared the true state of affairs would become public property, and that he would be disgraced with the best people, whose friendship and support he valued. He did not fear that the captain, or his friend Huggings would breathe a word about what had happened. It was the boy to whom he felt he owed his life who was sure to give him away, while at the same time he would boast of having rescued him from certain death.

The thought troubled him, and he at once decided he must purchase his silence at any cost. His experience with the world told him that most people have their price, and Dick, being a stranger to him, he wondered how large a sum it would take to stop his mouth. In his pocket he carried a roll that stacked up \$1,200. He decided that ought to be enough to satisfy the boy, but if it wasn't he would send him more the next day.

"Boy," he said hoarsely, "you have saved my life, and I am grateful to you."

"That's all right. You are welcome to what I have done for you. I am glad to have been of service to you."

"What is your name, boy?"

"Dick Dexter."

"You're a brave lad."

"Every fellow ought to do his duty."

"You saved my life."

"Don't let that fact worry you."

"You are very good, boy. I can't thank you enough. But it's a bad business, I say. I shall be disgraced."

"Disgraced! How, sir? Your ducking was an accident and might happen to any one under the same circumstances."

"Under the same circumstances—yes. It's the circumstances that I fear will ruin me with many of my constituents."

"I don't understand you."

"Boy, you understand the condition I was in.

You know I was—intoxicated—that is, to some extent."

"Why talk about it, sir? I suppose a man in your position has got to drink when others drink."

"I would give a thousand dollars rather than have it known that I drank too much and, in consequence, fell into the lake because I couldn't keep my head. I have political enemies who would be glad to make capital at my expense. If the story got into the papers, I should be ashamed to meet many of my best friends. Boy, you will keep the matter quiet. Remember, you could hurt my reputation seriously."

"I'll never say a word, sir."

"That's right. Take this," he said, crowding his roll into Dick's hand.

At that moment a light came in sight ahead and Dick knew they were close to the cottage.

"That's our cottage yonder," he said, mechanically dropping the roll of wet paper in his side pocket. "A few more steps and we'll be there."

"You won't forget your promise—to keep this bad business quiet?" said the Congressman anxiously.

"You can depend on me, sir," answered Dick.

Feeling relieved, the great man followed the boy up to the front door, on which Dick rapped loudly. Mr. Morse came to the door, but he did not open it wholly, but only as far as it would go on the chain—a matter of three inches.

"Who is there?" he asked, in a quavering tone.

"It's me—Dick," said the boy impatiently, wondering what his stepfather was afraid of. "Open up. Here is the Honorable Mr. Buckley. He met with an accident in the lake—fell into the water and is cold and wet. I brought him here because our cottage was the nearest house."

At the mention of the Congressman's name, Mr. Morse lost no time in letting down the chain and opening the door to its widest extent.

"Come in, Mr. Buckley," said Dick, and he led the gentleman across the hall into the sitting room, where his mother sat at the center table, darning her husband's well-worn socks.

"Mother," said Dick, "this is Mr. Buckley, our Congressional representative."

"Glad to make your acquaintance, madam," said the magnate politely, with a bow. "Sorry, I'm so unpresentable, but unfortunately I fell into the lake and would have drowned but for your son, who saved me at some risk to himself. I shall always remember his services, and anything I can do to advance his interests will be most cheerfully done, I assure you."

"You will have to change your clothes, sir," said Mrs. Morse, "or you will get a bad cold. Mr. Morse will do what he can for you. I will prepare you a hot drink at once, and anything else we can do for your comfort will be cheerfully done."

"Thank you, madam. You are placing me under great obligations which I shall not fail to remember," said the great man.

"I think you'd better turn into my bed, Mr. Buckley," said Dick, who knew that his stepfather had no decent suit to loan the visitor, even if his garments would fit him half-way. "You were in the water a good while and must be chilled through. Come with me. Mother,

please have a blanket thoroughly warmed and sent to my room."

The Congressman made no objection to the boy's suggestion. Dick piloted him to his room and told him to hustle out of his clothes. The boy did the same in short order, and seizing a towel, gave himself a quick rubdown, and then got into dry underwear. By that time the magistrate was wholly undressed and Dick gave him a vigorous rubbing and chased him under the clothes. Dick had finished getting into his Sunday suit when Mr. Morse brought the warm blanket from the kitchen. Mr. Buckley was wrapped up in it and he immediately declared that he felt a whole lot better. The hot drink came next, and the gentleman swallowed it down at the risk of burning his throat.

"Now turn over and try to go to sleep. You'll be all right, I hope, in the morning," said Dick. "I'll start for your house to let your family know that you were saved from the lake and will be home as soon as possible."

CHAPTER VIII.—The Two Men in the Barn Loft.

Dick took a warm drink himself and then started forth on his mission. He secured a saddle horse at the village stable, and before he started out of the village he rode down to the steamboat and told a deckhand to inform the captain that Mr. Buckley had been saved from the lake. About fifteen minutes later he galloped into the grounds of the Buckley property, dismounted at the porch and rang the bell. A maid came to the door.

"I should like to see Mrs. Buckley," he said.

"I'm afraid you can't see her. She is in great trouble."

"About her husband, you mean?"

"Yes. He fell off the steamboat into the lake and is reported drowned."

"The report is not correct. I came to tell Mrs. Buckley that he was rescued and is quite safe. He is in bed at our cottage on Throgg's Neck."

The maid uttered an ejaculation of pleasure and told Dick to come in. She told him to take a seat in the hall; then she rushed upstairs quicker than she had ever done before in her life. Inside of five minutes down came Mr. Huggings. He at once recognized Dick.

"Hello, young man! So Mr. Buckley is not dead?"

"No, sir. I went overboard with him, you know, and I managed to save him in the end, though it was a hard job, for he's a heavy man for me to handle."

"I should judge so. Well, this is a delightful surprise. We adopted every means possible to get a trace of you two after you went in. We traced all the way to the edge of the marsh without success."

"That's where we came ashore."

"What! At the marsh?"

"Yes. We were really saved by a flimsy kind of raft that we ran into not far from the steamer. We were carried down to the marsh and then, luckily for us, reached the shore. I took Mr. Buckley over to where I live, a quarter of

a mile away. It was the nearest place we could go to for shelter. He is in bed there now and will stay until morning. You can tell Mrs. Buckley to send the car for him about nine o'clock."

Dick got up to go.

"Don't be in a hurry! I dare say Mrs. Buckley would like to see you and learn all the facts. Follow me upstairs."

Dick fell in behind him and was ushered into a handsomely furnished sitting room on the second floor, where he found Mrs. Buckley, her daughter and the maid.

"What is your name, young man?" asked Huggings.

Dick told him and was immediately introduced to the lady of the house and her daughter, whose good looks greatly impressed the young visitor. Both showed traces of great agitation, and it could easily be seen they had been crying.

"You have brought the news that Mr. Buckley was rescued?" said Mrs. Buckley.

"Yes, ma'am. He and I went into the lake together, and I held on to him till I got him ashore," replied Dick.

"Then he is indebted to you for his life. We are very grateful to you—very. It would be impossible for us to tell you how much. Mr. Buckley will reward you handsomely."

"I don't want any reward, ma'am. I'd do as much for anybody in the same position. It was my duty to save him if I could."

Mrs. Buckley asked if her husband was in need of a doctor, and Dick said he guessed not, as the chill seemed to have left him before he came on to tell her the good news. The lady asked Dick many questions about where he lived and other things, all of which the boy answered without hesitation. He told her that his mother had married a second time, and that his step-father was not following any business. He also said that the whole of Throgg's Neck would come to him when he was twenty-one, but the property was not considered as worth much, as there was so much rock on it. Finally he took his leave, rode back to the village, turned over the horse to the stablekeeper and walked home. He found his mother up waiting for him. She said she would make up a bed on the sofa in the sitting room for him.

"It isn't necessary to go to that trouble, mother," he said. "I can sleep in the barn on the hay in the loft. I'll be quite comfortable there."

His mother objected at first to that arrangement, but finally gave in to him. He took the key from the nail in the kitchen, went to the barn, let himself in, went up to the loft and opened one of the back windows and came down again. He locked the barn door, raised a ladder to the window, and climbed up, after which he drew up the ladder and pulled it in through the opening. He had to go to all that trouble because there was no way of locking the barn door on the inside. He took off his outer clothes, punched a hole in the hay and laid down, covering himself over, and was soon asleep.

He had left the window open for air. About three hours later he was awakened by a loud noise. His ears told him that two men were in the loft and that one of them had fallen over the ladder where he left it.

"Confound that ladder!" cried a voice. "I've barked my shins."

"Well, why didn't you look where you were stepping?" asked the other.

"It's dark up here, and who would suppose that a long ladder would be lying around under that window? I wonder what it's doing here, anyway? It ought to be under the barn where we got the other one."

"I s'pose the farmer was using it in the loft or he wouldn't have it here. You can stay here while I go down and hunt for the tools we need."

"I hope you'll find what we want," said his companion.

"I guess I will. Farmers always keep their tools in the barn."

"Light the lantern before you go near the hay. We don't want to set the place on fire."

"Look here, Nelson, don't take me for a fool altogether. I don't have to be told what to do."

"I don't know. You make some bad breaks occasionally. Last night, when we were on the island in the marsh, you carried the shotgun with one of the triggers at full cock. Nobody but a fool would have done that, for you didn't expect to use the weapon. Then to fill the measure of your stupidity you pulled the trigger somehow and off she went, raising the echoes of the place when silence was what we needed. If the marsh was not regarded as a dangerous place to go into, particularly at night, we might have had some curious people over there to learn what was up."

"What's the good of raking that thing up? No harm came of the gun going off accidentally."

"It isn't what didn't occur but what might have happened, I'm kicking about. You might have spoiled the whole business. Who knows but the detectives might have got wind of our coming down here and followed us?"

"What do we care for the detectives now? The stuff is ashore and hidden in a secure place, where it will stay till things have quieted down so we can carry it away and dispose of it in safety."

"If a detective, shadowing our tracks, had heard the shot, it might have drawn him to the island in time to put a spoke in our wheel."

"If the moon was made of green cheese it wouldn't look white at night, would it?" jeered the other.

"Why don't you light the lantern and go after the tools?" said the man called Nelson impatiently.

"I'm going. By the way, were you ever down here when your brother was alive?"

"My half-brother, you mean. No, I wasn't. We never pulled well together after he got married."

"Why not?"

"That's my business."

"His widow married again, I think you said."

"Yes, but my half-brother was smart enough to leave the property to his son. When he gets old enough he'll come into it."

"If he should die before he got it, then his mother would get it, and when she died it would pass to her second husband. Seems to me you have more right to your brother's property than an outsider."

"Don't worry about it. Go and look up the tools. You're as long-winded as a forty-eight-hour breeze. We don't want to stay here all night."

"Oh, it's early yet, and we have lots of time to sleep."

With the lighted lantern in one hand he started for the stationary ladder which led to the ground floor, while his companion pulled out his pipe, filled and lit it and began to smoke, with his head out of the window.

CHAPTER IX.—The Roll of Bills.

Dick felt that he had been treated to a double surprise. First, by the appearance of the two men in the loft, and, secondly, by the fact that one of them appeared to be his step-uncle, an individual he had never seen or heard much of. From the tenor of the conversation he judged that his relative was something of the rascal, and his presence in the loft at that hour strengthened the supposition.

Clearly, his father could not have known the real character of his half-brother, or he hardly would have provided for him, conditionally, in his will. Dick was curious to get a look at Nelson Decker, but he could not very well do so without risking discovery, and he was afraid that if his presence were detected, something unpleasant might happen to him in spite of the fact that he was related, in a way, to one of the men.

What he had overheard explained the mystery of the shot he had heard in the marsh the night before, but it did not explain the business which had taken the Decker party to the island, though it conveyed a hint that they had gone there to hide something that savored of plunder—something that divers detectives were interested in. The more Dick thought the matter over the greater rascal his step-uncle appeared to be. The men had paid their illicit visit to the barn to get some tools they were in need of. What did they want them for? It was impossible for the boy to guess. There wasn't a superabundance of tools in the barn, and Dick did not relish the idea of losing any of them. But he did not see what he could do to stop the men from taking anything they chose to lay their hands on.

While he was figuring on the matter the man with the lantern returned with a cold-chisel and two or three other implements in his other hand.

"The collection of tools in this shebang is about the scaliest you'd meet with in any farmer's barn," he said. "We'll have to get along with these or look elsewhere."

Decker examined the collection his companion had fetched into the loft.

"Well, they'll have to do. Stick them in your pocket, douse the lantern and we'll be off," he said.

Then they made their exit through the window, removed the ladder and walked away, followed by Dick's eyes, for the boy had rushed to the opening to look after them. They were going in the direction of Crystal Lake. Dick determined to follow them and see where they were bound. He hurried into his clothes, dropped the

ladder out of the window, reached the ground, and hurried after them. He soon came within sight of them and kept at a safe distance in the rear.

They went toward a cove near the western end of the marsh where it joined the Neck, and there, anchored a short distance off shore, Dick dimly made out a small sloop. The two men stepped into a rowboat and rowed off to her. Tying the boat to the stern, they got aboard of the craft and entered the cabin.

"They evidently came to this neighborhood in that boat," thought Dick, as he watched the craft over the top of the shrubbery. "They had some object in coming here, of course, and their conversation indicated that it was to hide something. Nelson Precker's companion said the stuff, whatever it is, is ashore and concealed in a safe place. The safe place is the island, I judge, since that is where the pair of them went last night. If they leave it there, I mean to go over and hunt for it, as I am sure it is stolen property, and ought to be returned to its owner."

At that moment the sound of hammering or pounding came across the water, showing that the men were doing something in the cabin. The noise went on for fifteen minutes or so and then stopped. Dick wondered what the men were doing. One of them came out on deck and looked around and then returned to the cabin. The pounding was resumed, and went on at intervals for half an hour and then they stopped altogether. The man did not appear on deck again, and Dick concluded to get back to the barn and finish his night's rest. When he woke up in the morning he heard sounds down in the body of the barn. He dressed and went down and found, as he expected, his stepfather moving about. He noticed that Mr. Morse had a perceptible limp in his gait.

"How's your rheumatism?" he asked.

"Bad, son; very bad, indeed," replied Morse, making a wry face as he ran his hand down his right leg.

Dick expressed his sympathy, and then asked if he had seen Mr. Buckley since he got up.

"No; I guess he's asleep yet," responded his stepfather.

Dick went over to the house and found his mother preparing breakfast.

"I guess I'll go up and see our visitor," he said.

"Ask him if we shall serve him breakfast in bed," said his mother.

Dick knocked on the door of his room and entered without waiting to be told to come in. He found the Congressman awake, aroused by his knock.

"Good morning, Mr. Buckley. How do you feel now?" he asked the great man.

"First rate, my lad. I guess I'd better get up if my clothes are ready to put on."

"They are dry, I guess, but I am not sure if they have been pressed yet. I'll run down and see. Shall I fetch you up your breakfast?"

"No, no; I'll get my breakfast at home. You may fetch me a cup of coffee, however. That will stay my stomach till I get home. What time is it?"

"About half-past seven."

"You went to my house last night and reassured my family?"

"Yes, I told Mrs. Buckley that you probably would be all right this morning. She said she would send the car for you at nine o'clock."

"Very good," said the Congressman, in a tone of satisfaction. "I'm much obliged to you. You didn't mention anything about my being under the influence of stimulants, did you?" he added, a bit anxiously.

"No, sir."

"That was right. I have your promise to keep mum. As I told you last night, it would greatly injure my reputation if the true facts got around. Now, if you will see to my clothes and afterward bring me the coffee, I won't trouble you further. Tell your mother I shall not forget her kind hospitality, and will make it all right with her."

"Your thanks will be all that are necessary, Mr. Buckley. We are both glad to be of service to you."

"You never will regret saving my life, young man. You attend school, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir. I'm just finishing a special course at the village school. It's a sort of high school annex, for those who want to go higher than the grammar grade. There's a regular high school at Chester, across the river, but it is not convenient for the village boys to go there."

"Well, if you will call on me when you are done your schooling, or write in case I'm in Washington, I will put you into some good job."

"Thank you, sir. I shall be glad to get a good position."

"That's settled. Now if you will get my clothes—"

"I will go right down and see about them."

Dick found that their visitor's clothes were dry, but had to be pressed out. He asked his mother to attend to them as soon as she could. Breakfast was all ready, and Mr. Morse was already at the table.

"Shall I send up his breakfast?" asked Dick's mother.

"He only wants a cup of coffee, but I'd add some of that fish. He'll find it tasty, for it's fresh, and some buttered toast," said Dick.

Ten minutes later Dick carried up a tray to Buckley's room, while Mrs. Morse started on the Congressman's clothes. Mr. Buckley did not refuse to sample the fish, for he really was quite hungry, having missed his dinner the evening before; and he pronounced it fine. By the time Dick brought up his clothes he had finished every morsel on the plate and drained the coffee cup.

"Have another cup of coffee, Mr. Buckley?" asked Dick.

"Thank you, no. I will be expected to have my breakfast when I get home," he answered.

He put on his clothes and came downstairs, where he found Dick and his mother at breakfast, Mr. Morse having finished and gone outside to smoke his pipe. The magnate proceeded to express his obligation to the lady of the house, and assured her he would make it all right.

"You are very welcome, sir, to the little we have done for you," replied Mrs. Morse. "We feel it to be our duty to extend our humble hospitality to those who require it. It isn't necessary for you to feel under any obligation to us."

A SHORT-CUT TO FORTUNE

"Nevertheless, I do, madam, and I will see you lose nothing by it."

"I hope you don't think of offering us pay. We could not accept it."

"Pay, madam! Well, not exactly; but you will permit me to send you some small evidence of my appreciation."

"If you insist on making us a small present, I suppose we cannot refuse to accept it, but really it isn't necessary. One always feels rewarded by the satisfaction that comes with a friendly action."

"Of course, madam, of course," nodded the great man genially. "But remember the person who has been accommodated has feelings on the subject, too, and desires to express them in a suitable way."

"I hope, sir, you have experienced no ill effects from your accident?" she said.

"None at all, madam, as far as I can see," said the Congressman. "I feel first rate this morning, thanks to your kind hospitality and your son's efforts last night."

The great man put on no airs in the cottage, and Mrs. Morse considered him a very nice, sociable kind of man. It was Mr. Buckley's geniality and adaptability to people and circumstances that made him so popular with his constituents. His car arrived at nine and he bade Dick and his mother good-by. As it was Saturday, Dick did not go to school. He had on his Sunday suit, and he wished to reassume his everyday attire.

"I guess my clothes are dry by this time, mother. They did not get a bit wetter than the honorable gentleman's. In fact, he was in the water considerable longer than I was, though the first plunge made us both about as wet as we could get."

He felt of his clothes, hanging near the kitchen stove, and announced that they were quite dry.

"I'll run over them with an iron and then you can put them on," said his mother.

She ironed out his shirt and underclothing first, then his pants, and took up his jacket last, Dick standing by with the articles thrown across his arm.

"What's this thing in your pocket?" asked his mother, feeling the wad of paper.

"I'm sure I don't remember what it is," said Dick, who had forgotten all about the roll that Mr. Buckley passed him on their way to the cottage.

She pulled it out and looked at it.

"Why, it's a roll of money!" she exclaimed, in amazement. "Where did you get all this money, Dick?"

Then the boy remembered.

"Great Scott! That's what Mr. Buckley handed me last night on our way here."

"Why, they are all big bills, as well as I can see," she said. "I'm afraid to open the roll much, for the bills are stuck together and still damp. He must have given you that money to take care of for him. You had better take it to his house before you change your clothes."

"I will, mother. I'll go there right away. I can't see why he gave me this money. He could just as well have kept it himself."

But as Dick walked up to his room he recalled

the Congressman's remarks that he would rather give \$1,000 than have it known that he fell into the lake because he was somewhat intoxicated. He also recalled the gentleman's words: "Take this," and when he asked what it was, the great man hastily replied: "Put it in your pocket. It will come in handy for a rainy day."

In the light of all that, Dick felt that Mr. Buckley had voluntarily handed him the roll of bills as a bribe to keep his mouth shut.

CHAPTER X.—Dick's Discovery on the Sloop.

Dick did not relish the idea of being bribed. He felt that it was a reflection on his honor. He had promised Mr. Buckley that he would keep his secret, and he meant to do it, for his word was his bond. He realized that the Congressman had pressed the money on him to make sure that he would keep his word—had, in fact, paid him to keep quiet. Well, he would return the money at once and tell Mr. Buckley that he wasn't selling his word of honor.

"I'll make him understand that I can keep my mouth shut, when there is nothing dishonorable in doing so, without being bribed," he said.

He wondered how much money was in the roll. It seemed to be a considerable sum, for the outside bill was a \$100 one, and so were the next three. Desirous of satisfying his curiosity, he carefully separated the end of each bill and this way went through the roll and ascertained it amounted to \$1,200.

"He must have money to throw away," thought Dick. "Twelve hundred dollars is a bunch of bills. He has the reputation of being wealthy. At any rate, he lives in a fine house, and I dare say he makes lots of money in one way or another as a politician. All of them are said to do it."

He wrapped the money up in a piece of paper, put it carefully in his trouser's pocket and started for Mr. Buckley's house by a short cut across the Neck. This would take him across the Beasley farm part way and down that farmer's lane to the road. By taking this course he would save about half a mile of walking. While passing among the rocks he suddenly came upon a man smoking a pipe. He appeared to be doing nothing else. Dick looked at him and recognized one of the men who entered the barn loft the night before—the companion of Nelson Decker. He wondered what the man was doing there. As he was satisfied the fellow was a rascal, he did not relish the meeting when he had so large a sum of money about him. He was giving the fellow as wide a berth as possible when the man hailed him.

"Look here, young fellow, what time is it?" he said.

"About ten o'clock," answered Dick, without stopping.

"Sure of that, are you?"

"I looked at the clock before I left the house."

"What house?"

"Where I live."

"Where do you live?"

"What do you want to know for?"

"Come over here; I want to talk with you."

"I'm in a hurry."

"I won't keep you but a minute."

"Come here, I tell you!" said the man, starting toward him.

"Can't do it," said Dick, keeping on.

That was enough for Dick, and he started to run. As he did so, another man, whom he saw was Decker, loomed up in front of him.

"Head him off, Nelson," said the other man.

Decker, without inquiring the reason, proceeded to do so. To avoid him, Dick had to change his course toward Crystal Lake. He ran as fast as he could, with the pair of rascals in full chase. Owing to the rock standing up here and there, he had to swing from right to left. The men proved such good runners that he couldn't shake them off, though he was no slouch at getting over the ground himself. They forced Dick to take to the shore where he would be cut off by the lake. With great generalship they spread out and kept him from running either up or down, and then they closed in on him and drove him right to the water.

"We've got him!" cried the two men. But they were wrong. Dick seized an oar lying on the rocks, and thrusting it down into the water, made a swinging leap for the rowboat, which he reached in safety. The boat belonged to the sloop, and the rascals had left it close to the shore, but the action of the water, which they did not figure on, carried it slowly away from the shore, and it was nearly six feet away when Dick made his leap. Only a boy as active as a young monkey could have landed squarely in the boat as he did. Grabbing the other oar, he increased his distance enough to make sure of his safety.

"Bring that boat back, you young scamp!" shouted Nelson Decker.

"I'd rather not, Mr. Decker," replied Dick suavely.

At the mention of his name Decker gave a start of consternation. This boy evidently knew who he was, and he had meant to keep his identity to himself. This lad must be the son of his dead half-brother. And yet how had he identified him when he had never been in that locality before, and had never seen the boy, nor the boy him? Dick stopped the boat at a safe distance and looked at the two discomfited rascals, wondering what move they would make next.

"How do you know my name is Decker?" said the owner of that name, after recovering from his surprise.

"I heard your friend call you Nelson."

"Well, that isn't Decker."

"I know it isn't, but I know your name is Nelson Decker."

"Maybe you're Dick Decker?"

"You've hit it right."

"Then you're my half-nephew."

"I believe I am."

"I'm glad to meet you," said the man, assuming a friendly attitude. "Come ashore and we'll shake hands."

"I'd rather be excused."

"What are you afraid of?"

"Why did you chaps chase me?"

"We took you for somebody else."

"Who else?"

"Oh, another boy who played a trick on us."

Dick was not convinced that Decker was telling the truth.

"Well, from what I know of you two I prefer to keep you at a distance."

"What do you mean by that? What do you know about us?"

"You were in the loft of our barn last night after midnight."

Decker and his pal looked astonished at this statement, and both wondered how the boy had discovered that fact.

"You must be dreaming," said Decker. "What should take us to your barn at that hour?"

"You came there to get some tools for some purpose. Your friend went down to the work bench and took away several."

"Nonsense!"

"No nonsense about it. I saw you both."

"You did?"

"Yes. You took one of our ladders from under the barn, put it up under the open window, and climbed in. You, Mr. Decker, fell over our other ladder which lay in the loft and barked your shins. You raised quite a howl over it."

"Where in thunder were you?"

"In the hay. I was sleeping there till you woke me up falling over the ladder."

Dick's explicit statement could not but satisfy the two men that he had been in the loft and that he had seen them there. Decker felt that he might as well own up.

"Well, I admit we were there. We wanted the tools to fix something aboard our sloop," he said.

"Why didn't you come and ask for the loan of the tools like men?"

"How could we at that hour, when we supposed you were all in bed at the house?"

"Then you could have come this morning."

"We were in a hurry to do the job we had on hand."

"Were you afraid the sloop would sink?"

"It wasn't exactly that."

"You used the tools, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"You haven't brought them back."

"We intend to do so in a little while as soon as we go aboard."

"I'll save you the trouble. I'll go aboard your sloop and get them myself."

"You mustn't do that."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't want you to."

"I won't run away with your boat."

"I don't want you to go aboard of her."

"Afraid I'll find out some of your secrets?"

"We haven't any secrets, but the cabin is locked and the tools are in there. You couldn't get them if you went to the sloop."

"Well, I'm going over to look at your craft, anyway. I have a curiosity to see her."

"I order you not to go!" roared Decker.

"Your orders are all right where you're standing, but they don't go out here. As you are a relative of mine, after a fashion, you can have no objection to my going aboard your sloop."

"I have an objection, and I won't have you go."

"How are you going to prevent me?"

Decker looked around as if in search of some means to put a stop to Dick's avowed purpose, but there was nothing available at hand. The

only thing he could do was to threaten Dick with the consequences, but the boy laughed at him. He felt he was master of the situation and, besides, he was desirous of visiting the sloop. Decker said something to his pal, and they each picked up a couple of sizable stones.

"Come back here or we'll make things unpleasant for you!" said Decker, raising his arm threateningly.

His companion did the same. Dick's answer was to dip his oars in the water and pull hard. Two stones came at him, but neither flew near enough to give him any uneasiness. Two more stones came after him, but with no better result. By that time he was practically beyond the men's range, and he kept right on to the sloop. When he reached her he stood up and looked into the cockpit. He saw that the door of the cabin was shut and secured with a padlock.

"No fear of my entering the cabin," he said. "Why should Decker put up such a strenuous objection against my coming to the sloop? There is nothing I could steal, if I were that way inclined. I'll get aboard just to annoy my relative, for I see he and his friend are watching me."

Dick tied the boat's painter and clambered into the sloop. He sprang on the roof of the trunk cabin and, swinging his heels against the door, looked over at the two men, who were now talking together. Dick didn't intend to remain on the craft any longer than to annoy his rascally relative a bit, then he meant to row into the marsh and leave the boat at some point where he judged it would be safe for him to land. Suddenly, to his astonishment, he heard a voice down where his heels were swinging about. He sprang off her perch and looked at the door.

"Hello!" he said. "Who's in there?"

"I'm in here—John Foster, cashier of the Creston National Bank."

Creston was at the head of Silver Lake, just as Lakeport was at the head of Clear Lake, only the former lake being three times as long as the latter. Creston was a matter of thirty miles from that spot. It was a large town, having three banks, the most important of which was the Creston National. That the cashier of so important a bank should be locked in the sloop's cabin seemed highly improbable to Dick. And yet the speaker's voice had an earnest ring that was convincing.

"What are you doing in there, with the door locked on you, Mr. Foster?"

"I'm a prisoner in the hands of two scoundrels who robbed the bank of a large sum of money. I've been kept bound in a kind of hole underneath the cabin when the rascals left the boat. A while ago I freed my arms, raised the cover of the hole and made my way into the cabin, only to find the door locked. I don't know who you are, nor how you come to be on the vessel, but if you can release me or get somebody else to do it, I'll pay you \$100 after I get back home," said the man in the cabin.

"Well, whether you're John Foster of the Creston National Bank, or somebody else, I'm willing to help you get out. As the door is held by a stout hasp and padlock, and I have no tools with me, the only thing I can do will be to try

and tow this sloop through the marsh to a point close to my house, where I can get a hatchet and smash the door open."

"Do anything so that you get me out and the \$100 shall be yours," said the voice eagerly.

"I'll start right in," said Dick, leaving the door.

CHAPTER XI.—Dick Takes Possession of the Sloop.

Dick saw the men watching him with great attention. He went forward and looked at the way the sloop was moored. Her anchor was down, and it was attached to a small drum-horizontal windlass by a stout rope. The drum was operated by a handle, which turned a double crank that, in turn, imparted motion to the drum. The principle enabled one person to easily raise the anchor, as the strain was distributed through the crank wheels and the drum.

Dick had seen this machine on similar kinds of boats before, and he knew that he could raise the anchor by himself. This he proceeded to do. The moment he started to turn the crank handle the men on shore became greatly excited. They shouted at him, but he paid no attention to them. The anchor came up slowly but surely. The two rascals suddenly began throwing off their clothes. This indicated their intention of swimming off to the sloop. What they would do to Dick if they caught him could easily be guessed. The boy saw what they were about, and he hurried his movements. By the time the anchor was nearly at the bows the men were in the water, making for the sloop. The distance they had to cover was not far for good swimmers. Fortunately for Dick, there was a very fair breeze blowing, and if he could get the sail spread in time he could easily keep out of the way of the swimmers and in a short time distance them, but he couldn't go into the marsh, for that would necessarily be slow and difficult sailing, and the swimmers could have every chance of overtaking him. The sail was not tied to the boom, but just lay on it as it had been lowered, as though the men had expected to sail at any moment. Dick hoisted it quickly, and as the wind swung the boom out as far as the sheet at the end would permit it to go, the sloop began to move through the water.

The rascals were so close now that Dick, fearing they would catch the rowboat astern, climb into it and pursue him with greater effect, pulled the boat close up and eased the sheet a bit out so that the sail would get the full advantage of the wind. Five minutes later the rascals gave up the pursuit and started back for the shore, while Dick laid his course for Dexter, a small town on the Neck side of Crystal Lake, about eight miles away. He soon lost sight of Nelson Decker and his companion. Shouting through the cabin door, he told the man inside that he had been compelled to change his plan, and he was now making for the town of Dexter. Anything that promised him his freedom was satisfactory to the prisoner and so the boat sailed on.

It was just noon when he ran the boat alongside a wharf in Dexter and tied it. Then he made his way to the station house and told the

police about the man in the cabin of the boat who claimed to be John Foster, cashier of the Creston National Bank, which he said had been robbed by the two men who had carried him off on the vessel.

"I know one of these men to be Nelson Decker, but the name of the other I did not get," said Dick, who then learned that the morning's paper had printed a story to the effect that the cashier of the Creston National Bank had disappeared, and with him had gone \$100,000 in cash and securities.

It was believed he was either carried off by two bank burglars or had been assisted by them. The bank had offered a reward of \$10,000 for information pointing to his whereabouts, and the recovery of the stolen property. Two policemen went to the sloop with Dick, and a locksmith was taken along. The cabin door was opened and John Foster stepped out, looking very much the worse for his experience. The story he told implicated the two rascals in the robbery and his abduction. The police told him he would be detained pending instructions from Creston, and at first Dick found he was likely to be detained himself, but on referring to Congressman Buckley as his friend and giving his address, he was permitted to go, but was told that he would be needed as a witness in the case. The police took possession of the sloop, and detectives were sent down to the Neck in a wagon, in which Dick was given a ride, to try and catch Dexter and his pal. They failed to find them, for when Dick sailed off in the sloop the two men knew it would not be safe for them to remain around that locality. Dick left the detectives on the still hunt for the men. It was nearly three when he walked into the cottage, mighty hungry, for he had eaten nothing since that morning.

"What kept you away so long, Dick?" asked his mother, supposing he might have been invited to remain to lunch at the Congressman's home.

"It's quite a story. I'll tell you as soon as I've had something to eat. I'm as hungry as a hunter," replied her son.

"Why, haven't you eaten anything since morning?"

"No, mother. Haven't had a chance to."

"I'll make you a cup of tea right away, and while I'm preparing if you can get yourself a plate, a knife and fork, and then help yourself to the remains of the cold ham, with bread, butter and a slice of pie."

"All right, mother," and he busied himself placing the articles enumerated out on the end of the kitchen table.

"You returned the roll of money to Mr. Buckley, of course," said his mother, waiting for the tea to draw.

"Didn't get a chance yet, mother," replied Dick, between mouthfuls of bread and ham.

"Why, you left here to go direct to his house. Wasn't he home?"

"I suppose he was. I didn't get to his house."

"Why not?" asked his surprised mother.

"Because I was stopped on the way."

"Stopped on the way! By whom?"

"Two rascals."

"Did they attack you? Have you lost the money?" he ejaculated anxiously.

"No, I didn't lose the money, but I dare say I would have lost it had the men put their hands on me. They chased me over to the shore of Crystal Lake, and there they would have had me cornered but for a rowboat I jumped into and pulled away in. Who do you suppose one of the men was?"

"How could I tell?"

"Father's half-brother—Nelson Decker."

"You don't mean it! You never saw him; how did you know it was him?"

"I'll have to tell you about something else that happened while I was in the loft of the barn last night to explain that," said Dick, who thereupon told his mother all that took place in the barn the night before, and how he had shadowed Decker and his companion to the shore of Crystal Lake and saw them go aboard the sloop, which lay close to the border of that end of the marsh.

Mrs. Morse was greatly astonished at this revelation of Nelson Decker's character.

"I'm afraid he is not a good man, Dick," she said.

"Good! I should say he's not. He and his companion are implicated in the robbery of the Creston National Bank of \$100,000 worth of cash and securities, and the kidnapping of the cashier, whom I found on the sloop this morning after escaping from Decker and his pal, and whom I took in the boat to Dexter, where he is now with the police of that town, who are trying to capture the two rascals. The bank offered a reward of \$10,000 for information leading to the discovery of the whereabouts of the cashier and the recovery of the stolen property. I expect to win that money. I have got a claim on it by fetching the cashier to Dexter. As for the stolen money and securities, which were not found on the sloop, I've a pretty good idea where they are hidden."

"Where?"

"I won't tell you now, mother, because I'm not sure about it. I have only the hint to work on that Decker and his friend dropped in the loft of the barn. I shall investigate that myself as soon as I get the chance. If my supposition proves correct, I guess the reward will be paid to me all right, and I'll be entitled to it, for I doubt if anybody can find the stolen property but myself."

Dick told his mother all that he had gone through since he started that morning for Congressman Buckley's house, and when he finished his recital he announced his intention of going over to the big man's house right away and giving him back his roll of bills. Mrs. Morse might have told her son that there had been something doing on the Neck while he was away, but she didn't. Bud Doble had been over, and had had a heated interview with Mr. Morse. In the course of it he accused Morse of attempting to burn the barn to get rid of him. Mr. Morse denied it, but Doble refused to entertain his denial.

"Your step-son saved the barn and me, too, and he shot at the party who tried to fire the building, hitting that person in the leg so he limped off," said Doble. "I notice you limp pretty badly yourself, which you didn't when we parted the night before last."

"I have an attack of the rheumatism," protested Marsh.

"That's why you limp, eh?"

"Yes. It always takes me in my right leg."

"As your word has no standing with me, you'll have to prove to my satisfaction that you have the rheumatism."

"How can I prove it except by my limp?"

"Pull up the leg of your trousers and let me see the rheumatic spot."

"There's nothing to see. The rheumatism is in the blood."

"I know that; that's why I want to see your right leg. If there is no wound on your leg, I'll believe you. Up with your trouser leg."

"I'll catch cold and that will make me worse."

"You'll catch something worse than a cold from me if you don't do as I order you to!" said Doble threateningly.

"Won't you take my word?"

"No, I won't."

"My wife will tell you I didn't leave my bed all night."

"I don't want any statement from your wife. I want the evidence of your leg. Get a move on, you old rascal, or by the eternal—"

Morse tried to escape him, but he might have expected to outrun a Western cyclone as to get away from Doble, whose dander was up. Doble caught him, dragged him into the barn, threw him on the floor, and sat on his chest. In that commanding position he pulled up Morse's right trouser leg and found his leg bandaged. He pulled over the bandage and found the long furrow of a pistol bullet. He was not surprised at the discovery, for he had expected it. He re-bandaged Morse's leg and let him get up.

"You've been shot, just as I believed you had. What have you got to say for yourself, you murderous old villain?"

Mr. Morse had nothing to say. Driven into a corner, he looked at Doble in sulky defiance. Doble looked at him in a way that was not healthy for Dick's stepfather. What would have happened we are not prepared to say, but for the opportune appearance of Mrs. Morse at that moment. She denounced Doble for his treatment of her husband, and told him to leave the place.

"All right, ma'am," said Doble, with a wicked smile, "I'll leave. But you may expect to see your husband in jail to-night on the charge of attempted arson."

"What do you mean?" gasped the little woman.

"Ask him. You've ordered me off your place and I'm going. Good-by!" and away he went.

Mrs. Morse demanded an explanation of her husband, but he told her Doble was a liar and ought to be arrested himself for making a false charge against him. Mrs. Morse took her husband's word and returned to the house and her household duties. Shortly afterward Mr. Morse went to his room, packed a grip, let it down outside his window, descended and made off with it across the rocks.

CHAPTER XII.—A Short Cut to Fortune.

In the meanwhile Dick walked to Congressman Buckley's house and found that gentleman at home, smoking on the veranda with his friend

Huggings. They welcomed the boy in a friendly way and he was invited to sit down.

"Thank you, Mr. Buckley, but I came over to see you on a special matter."

"Well, speak out. If I can do you a favor, command me," said the big man.

"I'd like to see you in private for a few minutes if Mr. Huggings will excuse you," said Dick.

"Certainly," said Huggings, getting up. "I'll take a stroll around the garden. I see Miss Buckley, yonder, looking at some early plants. I'll join her."

"Well, what is it?" asked Buckley, as soon as they were alone.

"Do you remember handing me a roll of bills last night on our way to my cottage, sir?" asked the boy.

The politician flushed and bit his lips.

"I believe I did," he said. "It was all the money I had about me at the time. I wished to reward you for saving my life," he said.

"Well, here is the money. I prefer not to accept it. It amounts to \$1,200."

"Why won't you accept it? I gave it to you freely."

"The words that accompanied it indicated that you handed me the money as a bribe to hold my tongue about the condition you were in on the steamer."

The Congressman turned very red in the face and was about to say something he probably would have regretted, but by a great effort controlled himself.

"Before you passed me that money, I promised to keep your secret, Mr. Buckley. I want you to know that I am a boy of honor, and that I would sooner bite my tongue off than let a whisper on the subject escape me. My word is my bond, and I intend to prove that all my life. It wasn't necessary for you to give me \$1,200, nor twelve hundred cents, to insure my silence. As for saving your life, I would not think of taking a dollar from you for that service. It was my duty to act as I did, and I have the satisfaction of knowing I have performed it to the best of my ability. That is all. There is your money. If you are really grateful to me, you will not attempt to humble me in my own estimation by trying to force it on me."

Mr. Buckley took the money.

"Young man," he said, with some emotion, "give me your hand. I accept your word. After this I would sooner take it than many men's bonds. I admire and honor your course of action, and let me tell you that you shall lose nothing by it. Young men of your stamp are badly needed in this world, and it shall be my earnest endeavor to help you to the front. You must allow me that privilege in consideration of the obligation you have conferred upon me. Hereafter I shall regard you as my young friend—a boy I regard as one in a thousand. You shall be welcome in my house, and to the society of my wife and daughter, who, I may say, are already predisposed in your favor. And now if I can do you any little favor before the time comes for the big one, let me know, and it will be granted."

Mr. Buckley insisted on Dick remaining to dinner, which was served at seven, and as he had his best clothes on, Dick stayed. After the

meal, Stella Buckley took charge of him, and they passed an hour very entertainingly in each other's society. It was half-past nine when Dick left Mr. Buckley's house and started for his home by the cross-cut that first carried him up Farmer Beaseley's lane, and thence over on the rocky section of his own property.

It was not a bright night, for the sky was overcast and a moaning wind swept through the leafless trees. Dick picked his way over the uneven places, and among the rocks. He wondered as he went what he would do with his property when it came into his possession. His stepfather had made a failure of trying to till that part of the ground that crops would grow on, because he was no farmer, and the man he hired to help him, at his wife's expense, had taken every advantage of his ignorance. Mr. Morse was not sorry to give the experiment up, as he didn't like hard work, and found the tavern on a hot summer day more pleasant and restful. Dick knew that his property was not suitable for farming; in fact, it did not seem to be adapted for anything except to live on, raise one's own garden truck and till a small field or two, the results of which would hardly pay the expense of the work necessary to produce a crop. Dick was close on the spot where he encountered Nelson Decker and his pal that morning when something unexpected happened. The ground gave way under his feet and he went down with a rush into a hollow space, and landed on a pile of dirt with a jolt that shook him up quite a bit.

"My!" he ejaculated. "Where have I got to?" The densest darkness enveloped him and his surroundings. Stretching out his hands, he could feel nothing in any direction. Feeling in his pocket, he found a few matches and struck one. The flash of the light revealed a kind of cavern. The walls were of some dark substance, which, in places, flashed back the light of the match in a dull kind of a way, like polish on a stove. The curious nature of this attracted Dick's attention and he went over and examined it. A big chunk of it came off in his hands, and it appeared to be of a flaky consistency. He dropped it into his pocket for subsequent examination, and returned to the pile of dirt. Above was the hole through which he had come, but he could only make out a dark path in the roof.

It was impossible for him to climb back to the outer air, for the soft dirt gave way under his weight as fast as he tried to secure a footing in it. He struck another match and started to examine the cavern for an outlet in some other direction. He came upon a kind of tunnel formed of rocky sides, the glistening, quartz-like appearance of which told him it must be granite.

"Gee! If there's much of this stuff on the Neck it ought to pan out something. A granite quarry generally pays well," he said to himself.

The tunnel went almost straight ahead, and granite was in constant evidence on both sides and above.

"I wonder how this tunnel came to be formed? It appears to be worn quite smooth all the way along. I hope it will lead to an outlet. If it doesn't—"

At that moment his progress was barred by a mass of bushes. He made his way into the mass with considerable difficulty, and pushed through

it, the bushes yielding more and more as he proceeded. Soon he felt the wind blowing in his face, and he felt like shouting, for the prospect of deliverance from his temporary imprisonment appeared to be near. It was near, and he presently stepped out in the open air. Once outside he stopped and looked around him to determine just where he was. It was too dark for him to do so.

"I must mark this spot so I will know it again," he said.

There was nothing to do it with but a lot of small stones, which he proceeded to make into a pile. Suddenly an idea struck him. The bushes were as dry as tinder. They were of no particular use, why not set them on fire? He acted on the suggestion, and in a few minutes flame and smoke began creeping through the brush, which soon blazed up into a ruddy glare that showed him the cottage a short distance away. As the fire grew brighter he began to fear it would be observed in Lakeville and that then some one would call the attention of the watchman of the fire engine house to it on the suspicion that as it came from the direction of Throgg's Neck the Morse cottage was on fire. That would bring the one steamer the village boasted down there in a hurry, and the false alarm would cost the village a matter of \$40 or so.

When it was learned he had set the brush on fire the chances were he'd be summoned before the village dignitaries for an explanation, and if it was regarded as satisfactory the expense would be assessed against his property. Under such circumstances Dick deemed it wise to hurry to the cottage and tell his mother about the cause of the blaze. The fire died down somewhat as he hurried on, and was soon giving out more smoke than flames, for some of the brush was still damp from the rain of the second night before and there was no fear of it spreading much farther than the mouth of the tunnel. When Dick entered the house he found his mother nervous and distressed.

"I don't know where your father is," she said, in a worried tone.

Dick let the word "father" go under the circumstances.

"What about him?" he asked.

"He hasn't been home to his supper, and now it's nearly eleven o'clock. Did you have your supper?"

"I had dinner with Mr. Buckley and his family."

"I was upstairs just now, and I found that John has put some of his things in a valise and taken the valise away," she said.

"Any idea why he did that?"

Mrs. Morse had an idea which she was reluctant to express, but finally, after a crying spell, she told Dick about Bud Doble's visit that afternoon and his threat to have Mr. Morse arrested for attempting to burn him up in the barn on the night of his first visit. Dick whistled.

"He accused Mr. Morse of that?" he said.

"He did, and I fear there is some truth in it. You shot at the man you saw setting the barn on fire, and Mr. Morse has a bullet wound in his right leg."

"Why should he try to burn Doble up?"

Then Mrs. Morse confessed to Dick the whole of the interview she had overheard between Doble and her husband.

"I see the point," nodded Dick. "Did a constable come here looking for Mr. Morse after Doble made his threat?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"Then he hasn't carried out the threat. I doubt if he will. At any rate, if he should, you could accuse him of trying to tempt Mr. Morse to go into a burglary against his will, and as he has a prison record he might find himself in trouble. Don't worry, mother. Mr. Morse won't go far. When he gets over his funk he'll come back."

"I hope so," said his mother, tearfully.

There was no doubt that she felt attached to Mr. Morse in spite of his disreputable conduct during the larger part of their married life. Dick succeeded in calming her down, and then they both retired for the night. Before going to bed, Dick took the flaky substance he had brought away from the cavern out of his pocket and examined it. It proved to be a mineral of a foliated structure, consisting of thin, flexible scales, having a shining, pearly and almost metallic luster.

Dick easily separated the scales with his pocket-knife, but the scales he picked apart were susceptible of being still further separated. He had often seen the stuff before in fair-sized sheets, and he recognized it as mica. Deposits of mica that would furnish sheets large enough for commercial purposes were not common in this country, and so if Dick's discovery amounted to anything he stood to make considerable money, without speaking about the granite ledge he had also so accidentally lighted on. That right rosy dreams of the future hovered around the smart boy's couch. It looked as if he had found a short cut to fortune.

CHAPTER XIII.—The Flitting of Bud Doble.

Dick was up bright and early next morning, and his feelings were as light as his room, where the glorious Sabbath sunshine played in through the window. He found his mother up and preparing breakfast. He lost no time in telling her about his adventure in the cavern the night before and showed her the sample of mica. He told her what it was, and what a valuable discovery a deposit of real good mica was.

"It represents a small fortune if there is enough of it," he said. "Then there is the evidence of granite I found. Suppose half the Neck consists of real granite, all I need do will be to open up a quarry and secure a market for it. That will give me a profitable business right to hand. Mother, I feel sure I have made a short cut to fortune," he added enthusiastically.

"I trust you have, my boy. No one better deserves it than you," she said, with glistening eyes. "If your father would only come home, I should feel quite happy."

"Take it from me, mother, he'll be sneaking in here in a day or two. I hope the scare will do him good. If things pan out, I will take him in

hand and make him quit the tavern and get down to work. I have found that of late he has grown a bit afraid of me. I'm quite a big boy, and I fancy if I read the riot act to him I can make him turn over a new leaf."

"If you could only do that, I'd be happy once more," she said.

"Leave it to me. Mr. Buckley is my friend, and he's powerful enough to do me a big service if I want him to. I said a few plain words to him when I returned him his money, and instead of getting mad he took the right view of my action and made me a promise that I am satisfied he will keep. Some day, mother, I expect to be rich, and maybe I'll marry Miss Buckley into the bargain," he concluded, with a grin.

He said it as a joke, of course, but many true words have been spoken in jest, and many things that have looked preposterous at the outset have later developed into real facts. After breakfast Dick took a lantern and went over to take another and better look at his discovery. He found the entrance to the tunnel rather bare now, but choked with the burned debris of the brush. He had no great difficulty in clearing it out with the rake he brought for the purpose. Passing on through the tunnel, he found evidences of granite everywhere.

Finally he reached the cavern and saw the light shining down through the hole that landed him so suddenly and unexpectedly in the place. He made a careful examination of the deposit of mica as far as its outer surface revealed it, and from the amount of it he saw in sight he was satisfied he had struck a mine of it. His hopes and expectations soared higher than ever. When he got back to the cottage he found a policeman and a light wagon waiting for him, also his friend Beaseley.

"We've caught the two men," said the officer, "and I came to take you to Dexter to identify them."

"I'm ready to go with you," said Dick. "Will you take my friend, too?"

"He can come as well as not," said the officer.

So the three started for Dexter, and during the trip Dick told Joe all about his adventure with the two rascals, but did not admit that Nelson Decker was his half-uncle—a degree of relationship that did not greatly embarrass him. Still he wasn't anxious to spread the news of the fact. They were taken to the city prison, the two prisoners were paraded before Dick in company with others, and he easily picked them out.

Cashier Foster had been allowed to go home with the president of the bank, who, after hearing his story, was satisfied he had no hand in the disappearance of the money and securities from the bank. The president left a note for Dick, stating that he would receive \$2,500 of the reward for rescuing Mr. Foster, and would receive another like sum if the two burglars were caught and convicted of the crime. If their capture led to the recovery of the stolen property he would then be paid the rest of the reward. This was good news to Dick, though he believed he would not be cheated out of the money, anyway.

"The two burglars have been caught, so I'm sure of half of the reward," he told Joe; "and

it's a dollar to a doughnut almost that I win the rest of it."

"You're in luck," said Joe, as they walked out of the station house.

"Oh, that's only a small part of my luck. I've struck a short road to fortune."

"How? By saving Mr. Buckley's life the other night?"

"No. I'll let you know in a few days. It's a bit soon to say anything about it now."

"How are we going to get home? There is no trolley line from here to the Neck."

"And it's an eight-mile walk. The police brought us here. I expect them to take us back. There's the wagon. Hop in. It's waiting for us."

A policeman was assigned to the duty of taking them back to the cottage, and they got there an hour later. Dinner was ready and waiting for Dick. He invited the officer to eat with him, Joe having gone home, but the policeman said he had his dinner before leaving Dexter. So Dick dined with his mother, and both wondered where Mr. Morse was at that time. Dick was full of his wonderful discovery on his own land, and he was eager to consult with some experienced person about it—some person he could trust and whose advice would be worth taking. The only one he thought he ought to interview on the matter was Mr. Buckley, so he decided to go to his house and see him. On the way he dropped in at the village hotel and asked for Bud Doble.

"The gent ain't here any more," said the proprietor.

"No? Where did he go?"

"I wish I knew. He left, owing me two days' board bill. He abandoned his grip, but all I found in it was some waste paper and several large stones. He is a swindler. What in creation do you want with him?"

"Nothing. I only wanted to find out if he was here yet."

Thus speaking, Dick passed out and continued on his way. His appearance again at the Buckley home was somewhat of a surprise, but he got a warm welcome just the same.

"I've come to see you about an important matter, Mr. Buckley," he said. "I am in need of some advice, and I think you will be willing to give it to me when I explain matters."

"Anything I can do for you, Decker, will be done, depend on it."

Dick then told him how he fell into the cavern by reason of the ground giving away under him, and how he discovered that he was in a mica mine.

"A mica mine!"

"Yes, sir. Three sides of the place is covered with mica. Here is a sample of it. How far the mica extends back I don't know, but I judge there is a lot of the mineral there."

The Congressman examined the specimen with interest.

"And this came off your property?"

"Yes, sir."

"You may have a fortune right there."

"I hope so. I have also discovered that there is considerable granite rock on my property, too."

Mr. Buckley asked him the size of his prop-

erty, and Dick gave him a rough estimate. He told the politician that until he discovered the mica and afterward the granite, he had supposed, in common with the village people, that his property was worth little on account of the mass of rock which killed it as a farming property.

"I thought if you could spare the time you might come over to-morrow, between three and five, and take a look at the mica and the granite. After seeing what was in sight, you would advise me what I should do to develop it."

"I will do so with pleasure."

"I am much obliged to you."

Dick then told him about the part he had just played in rounding up the burglars who had looted the Creston National Bank and kidnapped the cashier. This was another surprise to the gentleman.

"Your lucky star seems to be in the ascendant," he said. "You will receive \$5,000 for what you have done."

"And I expect to make the other \$5,000 before I'm through with the case."

Dick then got up and took his leave.

CHAPTER XIV.—Conclusion.

Soon after Dick got home from school on the following afternoon Mr. Buckley appeared at the cottage in his car. Dick lost no time in showing the mica deposit and the evidence of granite. The Congressman told him that, in his opinion, he had a good thing that promised a big fortune.

"Now I'll tell you what I'll do for you. I'll send an expert down here to figure on this mica deposit and also on the granite. His opinion is what you want to base your future operations on. After I see his findings, I will advise you what will be the best thing for you to do to develop your property," said the magnate.

On the following afternoon Dick rowed over to the island in the marsh to make a hunt for the stolen National Bank property. The footsteps he and Joe had seen leading to the twin rocks gave him the clue he believed would lead to results. He decided that the most likely place the men would hide the valuables in was somewhere between the two rocks, and he devoted his attention to that spot. Inside of fifteen minutes he brought a big package to light, and without looking further he carried it to the boat and made his way out of the marsh. He took the package to his room and opened it. He found the money in the original packages, and the securities with it.

He took it for granted that the securities were all there, for he had no way of verifying them. At any rate, he had won the balance of the reward, and that evening after supper he mailed a letter to the president of the Creston National Bank, telling him that he had recovered the bank's property, where he had found it, and why he had hunted for it at that place, requesting that a messenger might be sent for the package with a memorandum of the property stolen so that it could be verified before it left his hands.

The bank's messenger, a trusted clerk, came

in an automobile on the following afternoon for the package. The contents were found correct. Then the messenger handed Dick a certified check to his order for \$10,000 and a letter of thanks signed by the president of the bank. He deposited the check in the village bank for collection, taking a certificate of deposit in exchange for it.

About a week later an expert came to the Neck to look into the mica and granite deposits. He spent some time making investigations, and taking a number of samples told Dick that he would make his report to Mr. Buckley, as that gentleman had employed him to pass upon the matter.

That afternoon a letter was handed to Dick by the postmaster. It was addressed to his mother. It came from Chicago, and proved to be from Mr. Morse. He wanted to know if it was safe for him to return home. He said he was working as porter for a wholesale house and had given up drinking for good. He said if he could come back to the cottage he would look up a job of some kind and make an effort to support the house. His wife wrote him to the address he gave, telling him that Bud Doble had made no charge against him, and had disappeared from the village, apparently for good, leaving an unpaid account against himself at the hotel. He was told to come home. He wrote back, saying he would leave Chicago when his month at the store was up and he got paid. A few days later Mr. Buckley sent his car to the cottage for Dick. The boy put on his best suit and went to the great man's house. He stayed to dinner, and after the meal the Congressman took him into his library and showed him the report submitted by the expert, which was a favorable one.

"Now I would suggest that a company be formed to lease the rocky section of your property, which can be legally arranged through your mother as trustee for you, the lease to run during the term of your minority," said Mr. Buckley. "I will buy stock myself in the company, induce my friends to do the same, and give it the advantage of my influence. You will invest your \$10,000 in it, and I will have you made a director and elected secretary. The company will then proceed to work the mica mine and establish a granite quarry. When you come of age you will decide whether the lease is to be renewed, or whether you will sell the property to the company at a proper valuation, taking out the price in stock that will give you the full control of the enterprise."

Dick consented to the suggestion and put the matter in Mr. Buckley's hands to put in force for him. The company was duly incorporated under the laws of the State, with a capital of \$25,000. The Congressman took \$5,000 worth,

Dick took \$10,000, and the balance was soon placed. Mr. Buckley was elected president, Mr. Huggings treasurer, and Dick secretary. An experienced man was secured as operating manager, and operations were begun at once under the name of the Throgg's Neck Leasing Company.

Special attention was at first given to the mining of the mica, as it was less expensive to get out and ship. The mineral was regularly shipped to Lakeport via the Clear Lake Steamboat Co., and from there sent East, and elsewhere, by rail. In the course of a few months, "Throgg's Neck Granite" was advertised about the center West, and Mr. Buckley's political prominence and influence drew a stream of orders to the leasing company.

The granite was good stuff, and the sale of it furnished a good profit to the company, and particularly to Dick, who received a kind of royalty on every ton of it taken from his property, and then eventually participated in the dividends paid by the company after the business got in full swing. When Dick came of age it became his privilege to terminate the arrangement or renew it. As the Throgg's Neck Leasing Company was now so well advertised, Dick told Mr. Buckley that he thought the lease should be renewed.

"Not at all," replied the politician. "My idea is for us to form a new company under the name of the Throgg's Neck Granite Company to take over the property from you, together with the machinery and rights of the leasing company. The value of the property will give you the controlling interest in the new company, and you shall be elected president."

This plan was carried out, with the exception of one fact—it was deemed for the best interests of the new company that Mr. Buckley should continue to lend his name as president, and so Dick was elected vice-president, but he held the majority of the stock. And thus we end the story of the smart boy who found a short cut to fortune.

Next week's issue will contain: "BROKER BROWN'S BOY; or, A TOUGH LAD FROM MISSOURI."

"How can you have changed so, Henry? Before we were married you said you were fairly intoxicated with love for me!" "Well, Mrs. Peck, it usually takes drastic methods to sober a man up—and I'm sober now!"

CURRENT NEWS

TREES USED IN BEST SELLER

An average spruce tree when converted into paper yields about 500 pounds of that product, according to the *Scientific American*. If a novel runs to 300,000 copies, the destruction of trees would be 600.

DIES STARVING, WITH \$1,470

Herman Tamm, whose body was found recently in a building on Colonial Springs Farm near Wyandanch, L. I., died from starvation and exposure, according to Coroner William B. Gibson, although a bankbook in the man's pocket showed he had \$1,400 on deposit in Belfast, Me.

There was a receipt also which showed that he had paid a deposit of \$1000 on a farm in Maine. Tamm's brother, who lives at 823 Quincy street, Brooklyn, was at a loss to explain his presence in Long Island.

The last he had heard from him Tamm was in Maine and said nothing of any intention of leaving there.

SQUIRRELS MIGRATING

Thousands of gray and red squirrels are migrating from Oregon to Washington by swimming the Columbia River.

Capt. T. R. Rupert of the river boat Jane reported navigating through several miles of the rodents, many being caught in the heavy under-tow of the vessel's paddle wheel.

The squirrels are attracted by a great crop of acorns in the oak groves on the Washington shore and the grain left by reapers in the fields. Some of these little animals instinctively cling to sticks, pieces of bark and floating leaves, permitting the current to carry them down to points nearer the desired side of the river.

The point where hundreds of squirrels swarm directly across is probably 2,000 feet wide.

FRAT PIN RETURNED AFTER 42 YEARS

Mrs. George Thompson, of 35 Morningside avenue, New York, whose husband is a detective sergeant in the La Salle Street police station, has received a letter of thanks from Chauncey H. Pember, of 187 Sisson avenue, Hartford, Conn., whose Yale fraternity pin she returned to him after finding it last month in front of the Harlem Opera House, on West 125th street.

Mr. Pember wrote that he was at a loss to explain the discovery of the pin. He had lost it in New Haven in 1879, his freshman year at Yale, he said, and never had any idea that it would turn up again.

The pin had his initials and class numerals engraved on it, and from these authorities at Yale, to whom Mrs. Thompson wrote after finding the pin, were able to tell her the name and address of the owner.

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Daring Dan Dobson

—OR—

THE BOY WHO BEAT THE MOONSHINERS

By GASTON GARNE

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER IV.—(Continued.)

Dan looked into the other's face, curiously. "I didn't ask you to intercede for me with these people, Mr. Newcastle. I am attending to my own affairs, and I trespass on no man's right —any more than I permit them to trespass on mine. But, as I say, I am busy, and have to make a report on my father's property for him. So I don't think I will see very much of your neighbors with the sensitive, gentle natures."

Newcastle's face flushed darkly.

"You are a bold-spoken youngster, and I might as well be plain with you," said he. "There may be some property down here which belongs to your father. But there is not very much—I own a large section of country down here—and part of it is what your father claims. Let him come down here if he wants to claim any of it. Let the mountain men talk, but I don't stand for any fellow trespassing on my land. You've got your good warning now, and believe it when I say that you are in a dangerous country."

Dan listened without a word, just as Zachary Shank, in the rear of the group of attentive natives.

Newcastle continued:

"You aren't half bad, as a youngster. I like your nerve, and I heard of something you did not know that got you the name of 'Daring Dan,' if I'm not mistaken. But you keep out of family-feuds, and trouble. You'll better pack your duds and go back. Let your father, Colonel Dobson, come down here where the mountain people know him—that is, if he's not afraid!"

Dan Dobson's face flushed with righteous wrath at this remark.

"My father afraid?" he cried. "Say, my father ain't afraid of you nor your whole crowd of mountain bullies. And what is more, if he hadn't been assaulted in a cowardly manner by some of this crew, he would be able to come down here himself. It's not real fighting that has kept my father; it's this hidden ambush work!"

The leader of the moonshiners pulled his big hat down tighter at these bitter and fearless words. He was not accustomed to such language from anyone, especially mere youths.

"Your turn has just about come, if you get into this row. I give you fair warning to keep out of the region, Dobson. You go on at your own peril. There ain't any law here which your father can ever get control of, and you might as well know it."

Dan answered sharply.

"My father will control only such land as belongs to him, according to his deeds and legal title. But, as for that, I might let you know that I am half owner in this whole property, and I have right in my pocket the papers which prove my share."

Dan did not tell him that they were duplicates.

And Jake Newcastle, in the flurry of rage which overwhelmed him, did not figure out that the youth would have duplicates, either.

The lad was self-possessed, and drew forth a packet of papers from the inside pocket of his jacket.

"Let's see them," demanded Jake, hoarsely, stretching an eager hand forward.

Dan laughed noncommittally.

"Pooh, pooh, you are too eager, my fine sir. These are the papers all right, and I will show them at the right time to the right officials, when it is necessary to prove my title to the property."

Jake Newcastle shot a tricky look, under his thick black eyebrows.

"Now is the accepted time, my impudent young visitor!"

With that he suddenly lurched forward with a spring which was almost tiger-like in its ferocity.

He grabbed the papers from the lad's hand, and leaped back as nimbly.

But he was not quick enough to escape what young Dobson swung at him, in the shape of a hard young fist, that landed fair and square upon the resolute nose of the handsome Jake Newcastle.

"Ugh!" how the moonshiners' leader gasped with pain, as he clapped his hand suddenly to his nose.

"Good fer ye, lad," sung out Zachary Shank, who thought it high time to join the merrymaking.

"Well, I want those papers," said Daring Dan, as he went for the big man again.

Newcastle's face was crimson—in reality, Dan had broken the big fellow's nose with his terrific jab. The tall man's good looks paid the forfeit that day for his eagerness to get the papers.

"You don't get them!" snarled Newcastle, in a voice which fairly shook with hatred.

"Hey, cap, kill 'm!"

"Death ter the marshal's son!"

"Down with traitors!"

The rascals closed in around the two, but both Zach and Dan were prepared for them.

Their guns were up at the "ready" position, and they put their backs together.

"Now, come on, durn ye!" muttered old Zach, whose battling blood was aroused indeed.

The men hesitated, although they had whipped out weapons of several varieties.

They were not so anxious to risk their skins in broad daylight, however, even to avenge their leader's loss of prestige—and nose.

"The man who lays hands on me will have to be sewed together!" were the grim words of Dan Dobson, and his looks seconded the motion.

The mountaineers muttered and cursed, but none seemed willing to start the ball rolling—especially when that ball might be a rifle-ball directed toward their own valuable bodies!

(To be continued.)

FROM ALL POINTS

A NATURAL FAN

A dry artesian well in Newark, N. J., has emitted a steady blast of cold dry air for 25 years. The owner, a woman, had this current piped into the house, where it keeps down the temperature in hot weather, dispels dampness, dries the family wash, and dispenses with ice in the refrigerator. The current is continuous and steady, and experts are at a loss to account for its source and action.

CALIFORNIA'S LOFTY MOUNTAINS.

At least 60 mountains in California rise more than 13,000 feet above sea level, but they stand amid a wealth of mountain scenery so rich and varied that they are not considered sufficiently noteworthy to be named, according to the United States Geological Survey, Department of the Interior. Yet if any one of these unnamed mountain peaks were in the eastern part of the United States it would be visited annually by millions of people. But California has 70 additional mountain peaks more than 13,000 feet high that have been named, or 130 in all, as well as a dozen that rise above 14,000 feet.

AN ALTITUDE RECORD.

On September 28th last Lieut. John Field, Dayton, Ohio, flew a La Pere biplane to a height of 41,000 feet, according to his barometer reading, but the true height after the instrument was calibrated stands at 40,800 feet, thus establishing a new world's record. The previous record was held by Capt. Schroeder who, in the same type of plane, flew to an altitude of 33,114 feet. The La Pere plane used by Macready is equipped with a supercharger recently invented by Dr. S. A. Maus, which takes care of the rarefied air at high altitudes and also takes care of changes in mixture and keeps the radiator warm. A new propeller of somewhat larger size than usual was also employed in the record-breaking flight.

WINGED MOTOR CAR

A combination motor car and airplane which will be one of the exhibits in the Grand Palais, was successfully demonstrated at the Bus aerodrome recently before military authorities and a handful of civilians. It was mounted on four automobile wheels, with four speeds and reverse transmissions, and with a Cardan shaft drive from a ten horsepower motor. It was driven like a car on the ground and then with wings unfolded, took the air, actuated by a 300-horsepower motor.

After an extended flight, manuvering in the most modern manner, it landed nicely. Soon its wings were folded again, and it was driven into a garage of about the usual width.

The tests which were declared successful, were made by the pilot, Meyniel, for the inventor, Tampier.

SAWED OFF DEER PRONG

Game Warden Theodore Wegmann had an interesting experience while making his rounds on the north border of Itasca Park, Minnesota, one day recently, witnessing a battle between two bucks and creating a wolf of its prey.

Wegmann noticed a wolf skulking along the trail he was following, but before he could get a shot the wolf disappeared in the bush. A crashing nearly attracted Wegmann's attention and he found two bucks engaged in combat, with horns locked. After watching the struggle until satisfied the deer could not break apart of their own accord, he went for assistance and returned with Supt. C. M. Roberts, who brought a rope, a hatchet and a saw.

The two men found the fighting animals almost exhausted by their struggles, and soon had them under control. They could not be pried apart, and it was necessary to cut a prong off the horns of one deer to release them. They were then turned loose.

Wegmann said the larger buck was a fine animal, weighing upward of 250 pounds. This buck lost the prong that was sawed off and the smaller deer had the tip of one prong broken in the fight.

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HARRY E. WOLFF, 166 W. 23d St., New York

The Golden Idol.

By JOHN SHERMAN.

The sun went down over the African coast of the Mediterranean, tinting the curling surf beating in on the rocky shore with varigated hues of golden splendor.

In the offing laid the trading schooner Molly Boggs, becalmed, her sails hanging limply on the masts, and not a ripple disturbing the sluggish water at her bow.

Within half a mile was the coast of the island of Pharos, on the northeast point of which arose the ancient lighthouse of the same name, and in the back of which stretched the mole, Heptastadium, connecting it with the mainland.

The Molly Boggs had been laden with a miscellaneous cargo, most of which was gone, its place being occupied by the products of Morocco, Algeria, Tunis and Tripoli, taken in exchange.

On the deck of the schooner was a scene of idleness.

A sailor stood at the helm, a group of sunburned fellows were lounging up forward, and at the midship's bulwarks on the lee side stood two boys, both about eighteen years of age, conversing.

One was a white boy, and the other a negro.

"So you have been to Alexandria before, have you, Sherry?" asked the white boy to his companion, in surprised tones.

"Yes, sah. I'se been brung up by Cappen Boggs on dis yere vessel, Jack Brooks, an' I tol yer, sah, dis am a bad place."

"Ah, here comes Captain Boggs."

The cabin door had opened and a short, bandy-legged man emerged with a pipe in his mouth, his hands in his pockets and a telescope under his arm nearly a yard long.

At this moment Sherry pointed out at the water.

"Looker dar! Wha' yo' call dat, sah?" he queried.

"A boat containing a young woman!" exclaimed Jack.

"An' b'gum, she's agoin' ter board us, too," added the captain.

She had long hair falling down over her shoulders, was attired in a dress of a peculiar fabric, without sleeves, looked very much like a Greek or an Egyptian girl, and wore no veil over her face, as is customary in Egypt.

Her skin was almost copper colored, and as the boat drew closer they saw that she had a wonderfully beautiful face.

She made her boat fast and with surprising agility came up on the martingale shrouds to the deck.

Her big black eyes roved around until she distinguished the captain from the rest; then she approached him.

"Are you the captain of this vessel?"

"Yes, ma'am," he replied, with a sudden bow. "What's wantin', ma'am?"

"I aw that your vessel was an American by the flag, and I want to know if you are going

anywhere near New York on your return to the United States?"

"That's ther werry port as we hails from, ma'am."

"Then take me to your country."

The captain was astonished at this request.

"Take yer to New York!" he gasped. "This ain't no passenger vessel, ma'am. An' wot you'd do arter yer gits thar, I don't know."

"In the first place, then, let me inform you I am married."

"Married? Oh, B'gum! An' you're English-spoken, too?"

"Yes; my father was an English merchant—my mother a Greek woman; and we lived in Alexandria since I was born, for my father had his place of business there. Both of my parents recently died of cholera, leaving me alone in the world. A short time ago an American vessel came here to carry away one of two obelisks called Cleopatra's Needles, which King Thotmes III erected. One of the crew of that vessel is my husband."

"Ah! An' ther lubber sailed away an' lef yer here alone?"

"He did, but it was owing to the rascality of an Egyptian who desired my hand in marriage before I gave my heart to Henry Gordon."

"So Gordon was your husband's name?"

"It was. His rival was Demetrius Soter, a powerful tyrant, living on the mole, in the new Bruchium near the water. He is a favorite of the khedive, and laid a wicked conspiracy to separate me from my husband, in hopes that I will marry him. On the western side of the city is the Serapeion—the last heathen temple which the Christians stormed in the year 39 and converted into a church. It is now a ruin, but still preserved the pagan deity of gold, called Pasht. The goddess was stolen. Demetrius accused me and my husband of the theft. On the day he and I were to sail I was seized, imprisoned, and my husband fled. After my husband fled in the monolith vessel I was liberated, the charge against me withdrawn, and I returned home only to find my husband had gone away, leaving me, in the supposition that I was killed. To escape the persecutions of my enemy and again meet my husband, I wish to accompany you."

"An' so yer shall, my gal," said the skipper. "But tell me, ma'am, wuz that ere idol really hooked?"

"Demetrius had it taken from the ruined temple by his negroes, and one of them secretly confessed to me where it had been hidden. I went with him and saw it. My enemy had it under his house. The authorities searched in vain for the valuable relic."

"Does anybody in pertickler own that ere golden idol?"

"No. It is simply a relic of antiquity, claimed by the government."

"Then, b'gum, ma'am, I'm agoin' ter try ter git it myself."

"I will go with you, but you had best arm yourself."

"Certainly I will, my lass. Now jist go inter my cabin and make yourself comfortable as ye kin till nightfall."

The girl bowed, and a moment later disappeared in the cabin.

As the darkness settled down, lights began to appear along the shore, and the captain went into the cabin where Sherry had prepared a taste-
ful repast, to which Zuleima—the girl—Jack, and he himself sat down.

After they arose from the table Boggs got Jack and Sherry and the two sailors together, armed them with muskets and small arms, the boat was made ready, and, accompanied by the girl, they were rowed toward the island with her boat in tow.

The girl directed them toward a broad neck of land, and after a while they came in sight of a wide flight of stairs leading up from the water's edge, at the summit of which stood a magnifi-
cent pillared' house, surrounded by gardens. Zuleima told them it was the abode of her enemy.

Guided now by the land, they had but little difficulty in keeping along, and after they passed the stairs she said:

"Row in close to the shore. It is walled up—the water deep."

One hundred yards further on they found a mass of rocks, in which was an aperture, into which Zuleima guided them. They had taken the precaution to bring torches, and leaving the boat they followed the girl into an arched pas-
sage. A short walk brought them to what seemed to be a huge cavern, and the girl darted ahead.

The boy went on after the girl with Sherry, when suddenly his foot struck something and he fell. The torch was extinguished—the place wrapped in darkness.

At the same time Jack heard a loud cry from the girl's lips, and Sherry running round in ter-
ror.

"Fly!" cried the girl, frantically. "We are dis-
covered!"

"Massa Jack!" shouted Sherry's frightened voice from somewhere in the darkness, and the young clerk scrambled to his feet and hastily lit his torch again with a match. He saw Sherry kneeling on the ground and ran up to him. The negro's arm was outstretched and a terrified ex-
pression upon his face, as Jack approached him with his musket in his hand.

Raising the torch, Jack beheld the monstrously ugly idol of which they were in search. Be-
side it stood Zuleima. The girl was terrified, for back in the darkness loomed the Egyptian, hold-
ing her.

They could see that Demetrius was a stalwart, ugly fellow, and in back of him were a dozen blacks, fully armed.

The captain and his men raised their muskets and fired a volley. As he had expected, it frightened their opponents, and they ran helter-skelter for a flight of stone stairs in back.

The girl, finding herself released, ran over to Boggs' party.

"Now's yer time!" exclaimed the captain, jubilantly. "You two run in and carry the idol here before they gits over it."

The two sailors addressed did so, and came staggering back with the precious burden, amid a shower of spears and a chorus of wild, angry cries from the Egyptians.

They dashed out of the cavern, and reaching

the boats, they got in and rowed hastily away, towing the idol in the girl's clumsy skiff.

Upon reaching the schooner they got the idol upon the deck, and carrying it down into the hold it was concealed in an empty cask.

This was hardly accomplished, however, when the Molly Boggs was surrounded by a large flotilla of boats.

Hastily arming all his men, they awaited an attack from their enemies, most of whom were negroes.

Zuleima was locked in the cabin, out of harm's way, and as soon as the Egyptians attempted to clamber up on the deck of the schooner they were repelled by a volley from the sailors, under the captain's direction.

Again and again they returned to the assault; only to be driven back by the fire of the deter-
mined sailors.

With all sail set the Molly Boggs turned her stern to Pharos Island, and under the stiffening breeze she stood away to the westward at ten knots an hour.

The following day found them far down the coast, out of sight of civilization, and the ugly idol was brought up on deck and smashed to pieces.

Had it been solid it would have weighed at least two tons—and those who secured it was sorry it didn't.

All that day Sherry was kept busy melting the pieces into bars in the galley, and when it was finally reduced they packed the precious metal in a box and put it under lock and key, until they reached a port at which it could be sold to best advantage.

The gold was sold at Lisbon, and a much larger remuneration was received for it than they ex-
pected.

One-half of it was given to Zuleima, a quarter was divided between the captain, Jack and Sherry, and the rest among the crew.

From Portugal the schooner started for the Azores and thence made her way across the ocean for New York.

After a long trip she arrived safely, and under Jack's guidance the Egyptian girl went to look for her husband.

She was not a little astonished at the new world.

The obelisk had arrived at Central Park, and was in the course of erection, so Jack had no trouble to make inquiries for the man for whom the Egyptian girl had risked so much.

But a sad disappointment awaited her. He was lost at sea on the way from Egypt.

The girl keenly felt her loss, and for a long time was very disconsolate; but she found a friend in Jack, who had resigned from the Molly Boggs. And as the youth fell in love with the dark-skinned widow and she finally grew to re-
ciprocate his affection, Jack married her.

The Molly Boggs is still trading along the African coast with the old captain commanding and Sherry cooking; but they never went near Alexandria again, for fear that they might get into trouble over having carried away the golden idol.

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INTERESTING ARTICLES

CORN FOR FUEL INSTEAD OF COAL

Unless corn advances materially in price or coal decreases considerably under the present quotation, people in the country where cheap corn is available should use this product for fuel. Secretary of Agriculture Wallace suggested recently in a statement showing the value of corn as fuel.

"Ear corn at 20 cents a bushel," Secretary Wallace said, "is equal in fuel value to a fair grade of Western soft coal at approximately \$10 a ton. In districts where corn is very cheap now, the coal is usually of a rather poor grade and is selling at high prices. Under such conditions it will pay both farmers and people in country towns to use corn instead of coal."

SAVED FROM NIAGARA FALLS

Two men in a small boat were rescued recently at the brink of the rapids above the falls after a struggle of three hours. The pair, William E. Galley and Philip A. Williams, lost an oar while on the river and drifted toward the rapids. Fortunately they bumped against a crib, to which they clung.

Darkness had fallen, but their cries were heard and the alarm given. The fire departments on both sides of the river put searchlights into play and hundreds of automobiles faced the river bank in a vain effort to locate the men whose cries could be heard. The illumination lights of the cataract were turned on and men were stationed on the Goat Island bridge to rescue the victims should they be swept toward the falls.

After three hours, when the men had not been located a motorboat crew of firemen volunteered to skirt the rapids. They found the pair clinging to the crib and brought them safely to land.

SHOT FIVE LIONS FROM A FLIVVER

Frederick R. Babcock, a Chicago attorney, just returned from Africa, set a new fashion in lion hunting. He killed five lions, shooting from a flivver.

"My guide was William Judd, who was with Roosevelt," he said. "We used a zebra for bait.

While other beasts were circling about a lion approached. We were perfectly quiet while the lion walked near to the zebra. Suddenly the head light of the flivver were turned on and the lion looked up, straight toward us. He was puzzled for a moment, blinded and partially hypnotized by the glare, and it was not a difficult matter to shoot him.

"Give me the car every time. It can go anywhere, except into the jungle, and that is impenetrable anyway. We shot four other lions the same way. The searchlight dazes, frightens and renders them powerless for a time.

"One of the most interesting experiences of the trip was an interview with the ex-Sultan of Zanzibar, who was being exiled with his three wives.

"The Sultan bet on the wrong horse," said Mr. Babcock. "At the beginning of the war he was sent to St. Helena. At his own request he was removed to the Isle of Seychelles. He and his wives were on the boat on which I was a passenger.

"I am a German citizen," he protested to me. "After the war is over, why should I be held a prisoner by the British? I can prove that I have citizenship rights in Germany, and I wish you would take a letter to some one in the United States when you go back."

LAUGHS

"Ever speculate in corn?" "Just once. Never again. Got my wife by finding a red ear at a husking bee!"

"Our minister delivered a touching oration this morning." "What was his subject?" "He asked for the annual missionary contributions."

"I assure you, Miss Doris, I'm working for all I'm worth nowadays." "Dear me. How do you manage to live on your salary?"

"Didn't you say your dog's bark is worse than his bite?" "Yes." "Then for goodness' sake let him bark! He's just bitten me."

Kind Lady—You look tired. Railroad Conductor—Yes, madam, I'm troubled with insomnia. Kind Lady—Poor fellow, why don't they put you on a sleeping-car?"

"Watch that woman driving a stake over there. She reminds me of lightning." "Why, because she is working so fast?" "No, because she never strikes twice in the same place."

"Now, Herbert," said the school teacher, "how many seasons are there?" "D'y'e mean in the United States?" "Yes, certainly." "Two." "Only two? Name them." "Baseball and football."

"Your husband says he leads a dog's life," said one woman. "Yes, it's very similar," answered the other. "He comes in with muddy feet, makes himself comfortable by the fire and waits to be fed."

A FEW GOOD ITEMS

MUCH HONEY FROM BOHEMIA

In 1920 there were 88,000 apiaries, containing 486,000 hives and 182,723 swarms, in Czechoslovakia, according to returns from the office of statistics, says a report from Trade Commissioner Breed. The honey produced amounted to 769 metric tons, valued at 16,200,000 crowns, and the wax to 53 metric tons, valued at 1,900,000 crowns.

SHOE IMPRINT STARTLES HAWAII

The discovery of what is described as the imprint of "a practically perfect Spanish shoe, with narrow toe, waist of the foot and heel being clearly defined," in the surface of an ancient lava flow on the west coast of Hawaii, near the ancient City of Refuge, known as Honaunau, has aroused great comment and speculation throughout the territory.

The first Spaniards to touch the island were said to have come in 1575, when, tradition says, a Spanish vessel was wrecked on the southeast coast. But the City of Refuge was built in the century, and there is no evidence that any lava flow came down the mountainside of the volcano Mauna Loa, which rises 14,000 feet above the City of Refuge, since the city was built. Consequently, it is presumed that the lava flow containing the shoe imprint is of a much more ancient day than 1100, indicating that Spaniards visited the island long before 1575.

The seashore at the base of Mauna Loa, near Honaunau, is one of the few remaining sections of the Hawaiian territory in which life proceeds along much the same lines as it did a century ago. Like many of the other strange things contained on the 4,000 square mile volcanic island of Hawaii, the problem of the "Spaniards's foot" probably will never be solved.

KILLING SNAKES HER FORTE

Feminine snake-charmers are no great rarity, but who ever heard of a woman snake-killer, and a champion at that? There is one. She is Mrs. Maxwell Miller of Palo Alto Avenue, Hollis, N. Y., who says she has killed at least forty reptiles, one of them twelve feet long. And she goes no further than to her own cellar to find her prey.

Mrs. Miller is small of stature, but give her a rake, she says, and she will still the life of any snake. The reptiles invade her cellar every winter. They had made it their winter quarters, she said the other day, for five years before she moved into the house, and they apparently do not intend to give up their comfortable home. Just why the snakes chose her cellar in preference to neighboring ones Mrs. Miller cannot explain. They come from the surrounding woods. There are always two or three in her cellar at one time, Mrs. Miller says.

Although she was frightened nearly out of her senses last winter, a few days after she had moved into the house, on finding a half-dozen

snakes in the cellar, she has reconciled herself to their presence, and is no more surprised to find a ten-footer curled up near her apartment door than at the buzzing of a fly.

RATS SUMMONED TO COURT

Nowadays when we are troubled with rats we buy a rat-trap and lay a snare for the troublesome creature. Or if some big warehouse, or ship, is overrun with the animals they are killed by means of poisonous gas or some such method. But in older days they were troubled with rats to an even greater extent, and they had very queer ways of getting rid of them.

In the year 1445, in France, it was customary to try by law any animals that made themselves obnoxious—just as people were tried in the courts. If found guilty they were likely to be sentenced to be burned at the stake. This worked well with large animals, that could be haled into court by their owners, cows, for instance. But how did they ever get such creatures as rats to come to court? They wouldn't come to-day; you might send a warrant after a rat, and he'd probably chew it up, and that's all you'd see of him. The rats of the 15th century weren't any different, either, but that didn't disturb the lawyers and the judges, or the people either.

When the inhabitants of a place were annoyed by the number of rats, they complained, and the courts appointed experts to look the situation over and determine how much damage was done. Then a lawyer was appointed to defend the animals and they were summoned, the summons being read aloud in places where the creatures were known to exist. In one famous trial this process was carried out, but after the first summons the rats failed to appear on the day appointed. Their lawyer declared then that the summons had been on too small a scale, and recommended that all the rats over a large area be summoned for a certain day. The day came, but no rats. Then the lawyer asked for an extension of time, because since so many of the rats were summoned, including old and young and sick ones, great preparations were necessary. More time was granted, but still the rats failed to show up. Then their lawyer declared that a court summons meant that full protection would be granted those summoned, both going to and coming from court; that such protection had not been granted the rats, which, though anxious to appear, dared not stir out of their hole because of the number of cats kept by the people complaining against them.

"Let the people who complain enter into bonds that their cats will not molest my clients, and the summons will be obeyed," he said. Of course the people would not agree to keep their cats from catching the rats, so the appearance of the rats had to be indefinitely postponed, and the animals came off victors.

Fortunately the attitude toward rats has changed in these days and we trust to more direct methods of disposing of the wretched creatures.

THE NEWS IN SHORT ARTICLES

GEMS KICKED ABOUT STREETS

Diamond rings worth \$5,000, tied in a linen handkerchief, were kicked about the streets and trampled by residents of Tarentum, Pa., two days before Joseph DeNanze of Tarentum, picked up the bundle in Centre street. The diamonds were lost by Mrs. Joseph Klein of Tarentum one Monday morning, when she was shopping. The jewelry was turned over to the owner by DeNanze. Mrs. Klein had offered \$300 reward.

FOLLOWS PET DOG IN DEATH

Taking a quantity of poison—that which was left after her pet dog had been killed— Gladys Coulver, 20 years old, committed suicide in Vernon Township recently. She died in her mother's arms exclaiming: "Mother, why did I do it?"

For several days the pet shepherd dog of the Coulver family had been acting queerly and the animal was put to death with poison the other day. There remained a quantity of the poison, and it was thrown in a brook in the rear of the house. About an hour afterward a little brother and a sister of the girl found the poison on the bank and showed it to her. Taking it to her room, she mixed the poison with water and drank it. She died before the surgeons arrived.

DOGS AS FOOD IN GERMANY

The Budapest correspondent of The Journal of the American Medical Association says that, according to the report of the German imperial slaughter houses and meat inspection officers during the second quarter of 1919—that is during three months—the meat of 3,642 dogs was subjected to inspection, 2,331 in Saxony alone. The number of horses slaughtered was twice that of peace time. There was such demand for horseflesh that the number slaughtered could easily have been ten times that of peace time, but there was a shortage of horses in Germany owing to difficulty of importation.

With the rise in the number of horses slaughtered there was a decrease in the slaughtering of calves and pigs. The traffic in these animals was not more than one-fortieth that of peace time.

GEMS DUG UP ON ATLANTIC CITY BEACH

Detectives working with shovels late the other night dug up diamonds and other precious stones valued at several thousand dollars which had been buried in the sand on the beach beneath the Million Dollar Pier. The valuables were part of the loot obtained in a daring Broad-walk robbery here in August.

The detectives conducted their treasure hunt with the aid of pocket flash-lights, and the search was directed by one of the men alleged to have taken part in the robbery. Two feet below the surface one of the shovels struck a metal bar, and a moment later the jewels were found.

The jewels were stolen from the jewelry store of Louis Wagaman, 2341 Broadwalk. The thieves gained entrance by means of a transom window. The loot obtained was valued at \$10,000. Three young men, alleged to have been among the thieves, were arrested recently.

They admitted their guilt, according to the police, and implicated another man and a girl. The latter is said to have played the part of "look-out." The three men gave the names of Emory Harris, Jesse Scarducio and Harold Ling, all of Atlantic City.

TRACKLESS TROLLEY MAKES INITIAL TRIP

The first trackless trolley to be operated in the city made its first trip recently from Sea View Hospital, Staten Island, through Four Corners, Meyer's Corner and Bull's Head to Linoleumville, a section which heretofore has had no transit connection with other parts of Richmond Borough, New York City.

The trolley resembles the city buses now in use except that it gets its motive power from an overhead wire, to which it is attached by a pliant pole. It can move from side to side of the road, and turn in and out like a detached vehicle.

The new line is operated by the city. Mayor Hylan, Grover A. Whalen, Commissioner of Plants and Structures; Borough President Van Name, Bird S. Coler, Commissioner of Public Welfare, and other notable officials attended the opening ceremonies. The fare will be five cents.

A MOUNTAIN OF SOAP

A whole mountain of soap has been found in the northern part of Arkansas by a mining engineer, Elmer Bird, who thinks the discovery will add greatly to the mineral wealth of the State. Mr. Bird, who has charge of the laboratory of the Engineering Exploration Company, with offices at Little Rock, says the mineral is saponite, a natural soap, and that such a vast bed has been discovered that it is believed to contain several hundred thousands of tons.

So great is the faith in this mineral as a soap that plans have practically been completed for the formation of a company for the mining and converting of the mineral into a cleaning powder and placing it on the market..

Saponite is composed largely of magnesium, aluminum and silicate, a combination known to have great cleaning qualities.

The discovery of the mineral was purely accidental. While making an assay of ore small particles of the mineral collected on Mr. Bird's hands. While washing his hands he noticed that the mineral lathered and functioned as soap.

Knowing that a great bed of the mineral was in the northern part of the State, Mr. Bird began to make tests, and found it to be saponite. According to best reference, saponite is not known to occur anywhere else in the United States.

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INHABITED?
ALL
GUESSWORK

In a letter to Science, Prof. George C. Comstock takes up the question of the possibility of other worlds than ours being inhabited, and quotes some of the things the late Prof. Newcomb said upon the subject, as follows:

"The spirit of modern science is wholly averse to speculation on questions for the solution of which no scientific evidence is attainable, and the common answer of astronomers to all questions respecting life in other worlds would be that they knew no more on the subject than any one else and having no data to reason from, had not even an opinion to express."

Again:

"It is perfectly reasonable to suppose that beings not only animated but endowed with reason inhabit countless worlds in space."

And finally:

"Here we may give free rein to our imagination with the moral certainty that science will supply nothing tending either to prove or disapprove any of its fancies."

On all of which Prof. Comstock comments: "In this connection one is reminded of a famous aphorism. 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.'"

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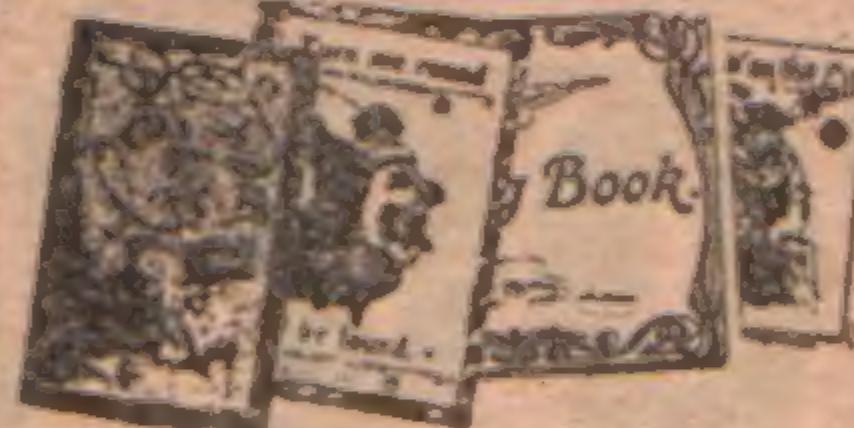
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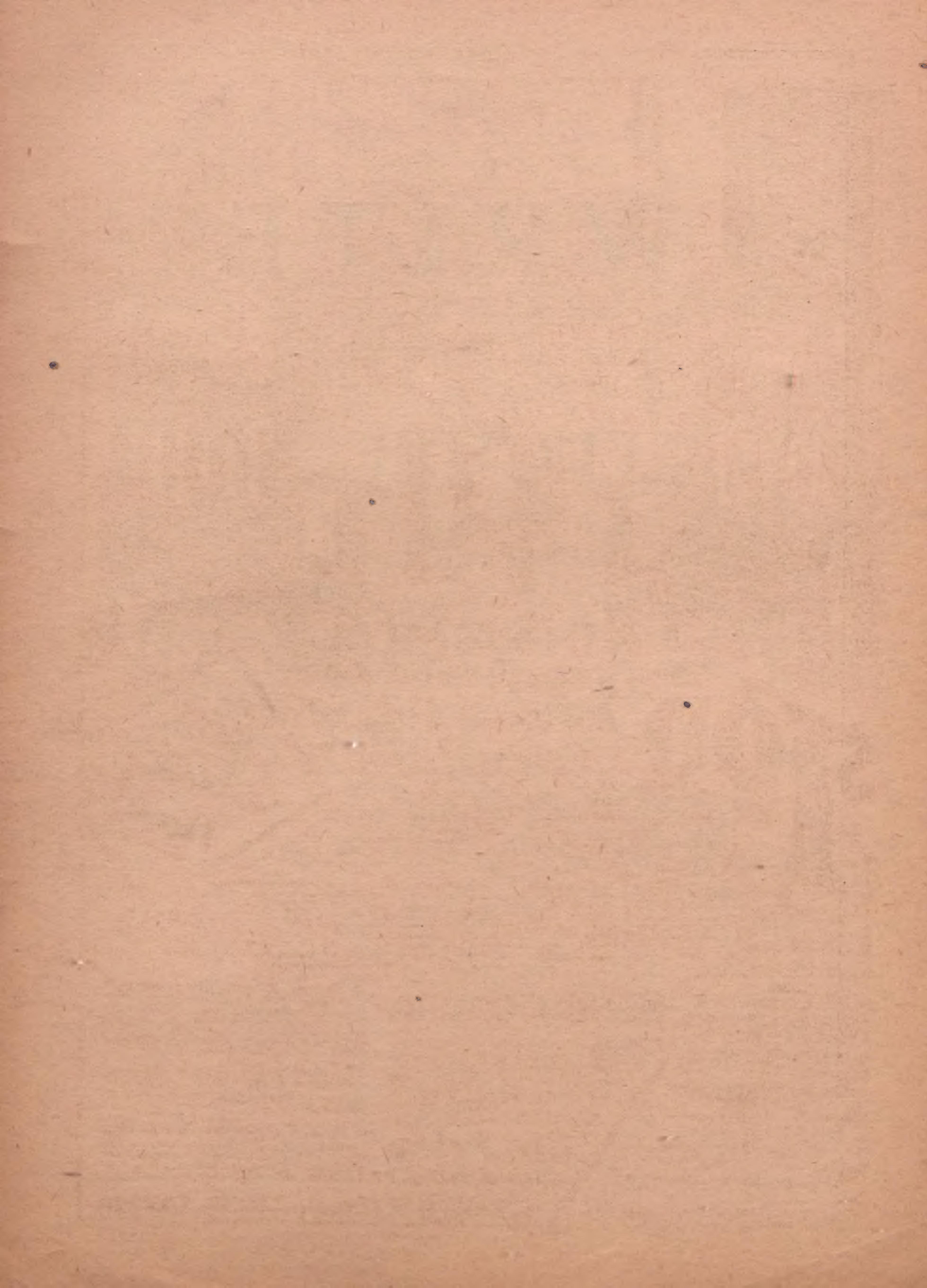
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